

CONNECTIVITY FOR REFUGEES



Community Connectivity Fund



UNHCR
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CONNECTIVITY FOR REFUGEES

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Interim Report



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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, UNHCR Innovation Service launched its first ever Community Connectivity Fund (CCF) to support operations in developing and testing out new concepts with regards to activities that advance the Connectivity for Refugees agenda. The fund aimed to provide extra resources and technical expertise to country operations with innovative ideas to connect refugees and the communities hosting them. Selected UNHCR Operations worldwide received an additional and complementary source of funding to implement, evaluate, and refine solutions that make internet connectivity accessible and affordable and have the potential to result in meaningful interventions that connect refugees and host communities alike.

With the Connectivity for Refugees initiatives increasingly looking at scale and impact, the fund represented a unique opportunity to experiment with novel ideas and contexts. The fund explored and expanded some of the key thematic areas for connectivity, including financial inclusion, digital literacy and self-reliance. Through small scale investments in promising projects and at country-level operations, the fund holds the promise to strengthen the capacity of field staff, and to foster a conversation on how to integrate connectivity for refugees into UNHCR's overall refugee response planning.

Six months into this first round of the Community Connectivity Fund, we look back and outline some important lessons and observations, and highlight initial results at the operations level across the countries that received funding. Considering the exceptionally short timeframe and deadlines for the fund and the fact that it was launched relatively late in the course of the year, this initial report focuses on the process of launching and managing a fund and will be followed by additional documentation on projects' impact upon their completion.

SNAPSHOT

A call for proposals for the Community Connectivity Fund was circulated via the UNHCR broadcast and other official channels in July 2018. All UNHCR Operations worldwide, including Headquarters, were invited to submit their connectivity project proposal and had one month to submit their online application form. The maximum funding request per proposal was USD 30,000 with all funding needing to be effectively spent before December 2018 for administrative purposes. Throughout the month of August 2018, all proposals were thoroughly reviewed by a UNHCR Innovation Service selection panel, inclusive of different expertises, backgrounds and positions. Specifically, a working team reviewed each application against set criteria and then made a proposal to a separate steering committee that interrogated the proposal of the working team and ultimately made a decision on who would be awarded funding.

All applicants were notified and received feedback on their proposals between August and September 2018. At the same time, individual consultations with focal points in UNHCR's Regional Bureaux started in order to outline the fund's management and project implementation for the proposals receiving funding.

The six Country Operations to receive funding were:

- **Côte d'Ivoire.** Improving Ivorian returnees financial and digital inclusion in Guiglo.
- **Guatemala.** Connectivity for refugees in transit in Morales, Santa Elena, La Técnica.
- **Mauritania.** Community connectivity centre & digital skills in Nouakchott and Mbera Camp.
- **Uganda.** Connected protection support desks in Bidi Bidi Settlement.
- **Nigeria.** Connecting refugees & host communities to online opportunities in Adagom.
- **Venezuela.** Digital literacy for refugees and members of host communities in Caracas.

Depending on the design of the project, processes relating to procurement and supplies took way and implementation began through the remainder of the calendar year.

This interim report reflects the situation as it stood at the end of 2018 and acknowledges that for many fund projects much of the implementation is still to be undertaken. Further documentation will be released mid-2019 with regards to the impact of the different projects undertaken as part of the first connectivity fund.

RATIONALE

The rationale for a Community Connectivity fund was borne out of the need to scale UNHCR's Connectivity for Refugees across a broader number of operations and a more diverse set of activities. Prior to the Community Connectivity Fund, interventions were in select pilot countries that were essentially determined on an opportunistic basis i.e. relevant activities were already ongoing, they were selected by the initial Connectivity for Refugees team based on their knowledge of the situations, or connections with UNHCR colleagues on the ground.

The premise was that the fund could not only broaden the support base but also prioritise certain types of interventions that would not only be feasible, but would also facilitate a learning agenda around a number of areas the Innovation Service had been further exploring as part of the Connectivity for Refugees initiative.

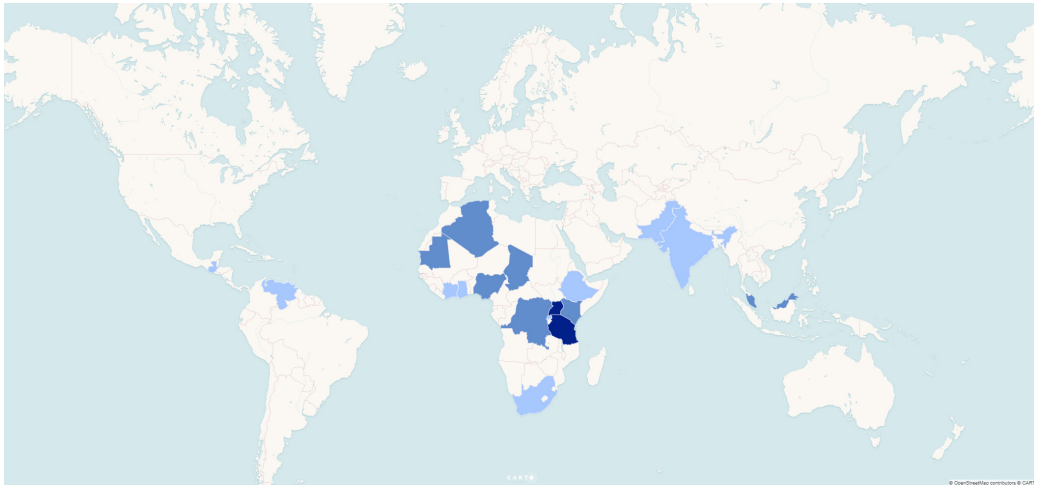
As such, the selection of proposals was done based on the following key criteria determined and defined by the UNHCR Innovation Service team:

- **Concept:** Effectiveness of the planned solutions and approaches to connect refugees, and how under-connected groups (for instance elderly, disabled etc.) will be supported through the initiative
- **Criticality and priority:** Criticality and urgency to solve the challenge
- **Refugee and community engagement:** Participation by persons of concern and host communities in the design and implementation of the project. Projects that are co-led or co-designed with communities will be prioritised
- **Feasibility:** Probability of success in achieving the desired results, including potential risks
- **Impact:** Anticipated positive effect on persons of concern to UNHCR or the Organization, both immediate outcomes and future impact taking into account increased scalability and transferability
- **Sustainability and ownership:** Potential for the project to be financially mainstreamed, owned/ maintained and sustained or scaled up over time.

2018 APPLICATIONS

In less than one month, the call for applications received a total of 28 submissions from 18 countries and requesting a total budget of more than \$930,000. The proposals were extremely diverse in regards to thematic and geographical areas, connectivity priorities tackled (availability, affordability, adoption, usage) and type of displaced population targeted (Internally Displaced Persons, refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, and host communities). Among the applications submitted, some proposed novel ideas and technologies, other focussed on new applications of older technology and in some, there was no technology component at all, but rather a process or a business model that had not yet been attempted, but showed promise for the community.

In terms of geographical distribution, out of the 18 Country Operations that submitted applications, Africa was the by far the most represented continent with 13 countries applying: Algeria, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda, and Tanzania. Three applications came from Asia: India, Malaysia, Pakistan and two from the Americas: Guatemala and Venezuela.



Applications came from different UNHCR units and focal points including protection, livelihoods, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), Cash Based Intervention (CBI), durable solutions, and data management. This suggested a marked interest for connectivity related projects and the potential for connectivity ideas and solutions in addressing the specific challenges of each sector and area of work.

Reflections on Applications (Out of 5)

	Concept	Criticality / priority	Community engagement	Feasibility	Impact	Sustainability / Ownership	Total
Project 1 - Algeria	2.67	2.33	2.33	2.33	2.67	2.17	14.5
Project 2 - Algeria	1	1.83	2.17	2.33	2.67	2	12
Project 3 - Chad	2	2.67	2	3	2.67	1.83	14.17
Project 4 - Chad	2.33	2.33	2.17	2.83	2.17	2	13.83
Project 5 - Cote D'Ivoire	3.67	2.5	3.17	2.83	3.17	3	18.33
Project 6 - DRC	3	2.17	2.33	2.33	2.67	2.17	14.67
Project 7 - DRC	2.83	2	2.33	2.67	2.33	2.67	14.83
Project 8 - Ethiopia	2.67	2.17	2.33	2.5	2.33	1.83	13.83
Project 9 - Ghana	2.33	2	2.83	2.17	2	2	13.33
Project 10 - Guatemala	4.67	3.83	3.33	4.17	4	3	23
Project 11- India	1.5	1.83	1.67	2.33	2	1.17	10.5
Project 12 - Kenya	2	1.83	2	2.17	1.83	2	11.83
Project 13 - Malaysia	1.83	1.83	2.33	2	2	1.33	11.33
Project 14 - Malaysia	2	1.67	2	1.17	1.5	1	9.33
Project 15 - Mauritania	2.67	2.17	3.17	2.67	3	3	16.67
Project 16 - Mauritania	3.83	2.67	3.67	3.17	3.83	3.83	21
Project 17 - Nigeria	2.83	3.33	2.67	2.33	2.5	1.83	15.5
Project 18 - Nigeria	2.5	3.83	2.33	2.5	2.67	2	15.83
Project 19 - Pakistan	2.67	2.67	3.17	2.67	2.33	1.67	15.17
Project 20 - Rwanda	2.67	2	3.5	3	2.5	2.33	16
Project 21 - South Africa	2.83	2.33	2	2	2.17	1.67	13
Project 22 - Uganda	2	1.83	2	1.83	2.17	2.33	12.17
Project 23 - Uganda	3.83	3.17	3.67	2.83	2.83	2.83	19.17
Project 24 - Uganda	1	1.17	2.17	3	1.67	2.33	11.33
Project 25 - Tanzania	1.67	2	2.33	2.17	1.83	1.33	11.33
Project 26 - Tanzania	1	1.67	1	3	2.33	1.67	10.67
Project 27 - Tanzania	2.5	3	2.67	2.67	2.5	2.17	15.5
Project 28 - Venezuela	2.83	3.33	2.67	3	2.17	2	16

Upon analysis of the 28 submissions received the following key thematic areas of intervention emerged: livelihoods and self-reliance, education and training, safety and protection. An important portion of the solutions proposed had a Community Technology Access (CTA) component and aimed at creating new or enhancing available centres or existing infrastructure, and access to training within these. Despite ICT skills being central to the curricula proposed, trainings varied in regards to the populations targeted and their specific needs: in Mauritania for example, emphasis was put on women empowerment and digital literacy, while Venezuela provided training for marginalised youth in urban areas. Following this type of initiatives were tech-focused interventions, including

the design and development of an app, platform, or product to respond to communities' needs in regards to protection, health, communication and information, safety and security. The remaining submissions were directed at availability of infrastructure and access to mobile devices, creation of WiFi hotspots or desks in particular locations, and improvement of digital financial inclusion.

While we were happy to receive some applications that had very much been pieced together with the criteria in mind, a number didn't fully expand on certain aspects we saw as fundamental to driving forward.

This also demonstrated, in an indirect manner, the types of approaches that are commonly thought of by local teams and illustrate to the broader Connectivity for Refugees initiative the type of capacity building and strategic support that can be strengthened for colleagues delivering at field level that will help push the ambition and scope of applications.

In future, we'd look to explore new ways of guiding operations through applications given that some had lower levels of exposure to good practices (noting the above point on capacity building, something to be addressed through reports such as this, and further project impact documentation). Thinking through solutions prior to application or utilising a mechanism that allows for greater guidance and support prior will help ensure that the type of applications we're receiving are pushing our collective practice forward, and giving a greater attention to learning than was the case in this round.

WINNING IDEAS

A total budget of \$160,020 was allocated to eight successful proposals in the following countries: Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, Mauritania (two projects that merged), Nigeria (two projects that merged), Uganda, and Venezuela.

1. Improving Ivorian returnees financial and digital inclusion - Guiglo, Côte d'Ivoire

UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire proposed the implementation of a mobile transfer solution providing financial assistance for voluntary returnees opting for repatriation to Côte d'Ivoire. The mobile money solution represents an alternative to the current return package available for voluntary returnees, which is delivered as cash grants mainly. Through the initiative, UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire aims to explore the use of mobile money as a delivery mechanism for the cash grants and ensure that financial assistance is safe, efficient and provided in a dignified and dignifying way. The proposed solution also encourages close collaborations between UNHCR and the private sector to better respond to the needs of displaced communities. Together with increasing the use of mobile money as a modality to provide financial assistance to returnees, the project aims to improve digital literacy and promote digital and economic inclusion, especially among women and youth returnees.

At the time this report was written, UNHCR Côte d'Ivoire had conducted community consultations and three kick-off workshops gathering UNHCR representatives, Ivorian refugees, and private sector partners in Ghana, Guinea, and Liberia. Pending an agreement with the Mobile Network Operators to be approved and signed at HQ levels, the mobile money solution will be piloted with the first group of returnees. The first 100 participants will receive a mobile phone device as well as SIM cards they can register legally, and free mobile money accounts.

Initial consultations with the refugee communities have shown a great interest in the mobile money transfer modality. UNHCR staff members are also enthusiastic to support the project as it will significantly simplify current procedures and practices in delivering assistance.

Total budget allocated to the project: 25,000 USD

2. Connectivity for refugees in transit - Morales, Santa Elena, La Técnica, Guatemala

Along the main migratory routes in Guatemala, refugees are often travelling without the connectivity they need to obtain vital information, plan and be safe during transit, communicate with loved ones, and access basic services. UNHCR Guatemala proposed to set up connectivity points with Wi-Fi, phone charging stations, and fixed tablets for navigation, in three strategic locations along the transit route (transit hubs, where populations change bus services) to address the connectivity needs

of refugees who are in transit. This would allow humanitarian organisations to better understand the movements and dynamics of people in need of international protection, and deliver more adequate and efficient services. The proposed solution aimed at improving dissemination of critical information for people in transit with international protection needs. Through free and easy access to online materials and resources, including videos and awareness campaigns, communication between refugees and their families and other contacts who protect and assist them while in transit, the migratory route will be made safer with clearly mapped out protection services.

At the time this report was written, implementation of the project had not yet started. The procurement process involved some challenges related to the limited provider options in Guatemala, as well as market price fluctuations that required multiple adjustments on the budget. Furthermore, the lengthy administrative processes delayed the project implementation. However, significant progress was made in regards to liaising with municipalities and private entities in Morales (Izabal), as well as Santa Elena and La Técnica (Petén) where the hotspots will be located. In two of the three locations (Santa Elena and Morales) the recurring costs of the internet plan will be covered by local project partners, thus ensuring the project's continuity over time.

Total budget allocated to the project: 36,000 USD

3. Community connectivity centre & digital skills - Nouakchott and Mbera Camp, Mauritania

In Mauritania, refugee women and youth are amongst the most marginalised groups and lack the access and digital skills to use connectivity as a tool to address key protection and information gaps that hinder self-reliance and professional development. The solution proposed aimed at strengthening existing digital skills and train refugee women to lead ICT workshops and activities within an existing community centre to drive change in their communities. Once the centre will be equipped and ameliorated, refugee women will be engaged in managing the activities at the centre, continue their training, design apps and products to respond to their needs. The expected results included improved digital skills, greater sense of safety and self-reliance, easier access to online training and employment opportunities, stronger communication and collaborations with UNHCR, partners, host communities and the Mauritanian startup ecosystem.

At the time this report was written, focus group discussions and consultations with the communities had taken place as planned. The first 20 participants for the ICT course, including both women and youth, were selected with the support of the protection focal point and ICT trainer. The different modules for the curriculum were also designed and presented to the participants who manifested great interest and curiosity in learning about the topics proposed.

Total budget allocated to the project: 42,200 USD

4. Connected community centres - Bidi Bidi Settlement, Uganda

In Uganda, refugees face various challenges in accessing existing communication channels with UNHCR and partners and, due to a lack of information on confidentiality and data protection, they are reluctant to share sensitive and confidential information. As a result, serious protection cases go unreported and little or no feedback is shared with UNHCR. The solution proposed aimed at transforming existing information centres in connected spaces offering Wi-Fi stations, “phone booths” and charging stations for refugees to access vital information, communicate with UNHCR and partners through the helpline and maintain contacts with their loved ones. Through the project UNHCR Uganda aims to streamline a structured and secure system, that connects Protection desks and Information and Support Centers and puts confidentiality and protection at the center of all communication channels, increasing feedback to UNHCR and greater accountability towards the population of concern, and achieving greater ownership of community spaces by engaging refugee youth in the overall management of the centres and improving their livelihood opportunities.

At the time this report was written, operation’s efforts had mainly been about consulting with communities and local partners to identify the most adapt locations for their solution to be piloted but implementation had not started. The procurement process involved some challenges related to obtaining satisfactory quotations for the solar power systems from the limited provider options, with considerable price fluctuations that required adjustments on the budget.

Total budget allocated to the project: 28,590 USD

5. Connecting refugees & host communities to online opportunities Adagom, Nigeria

Anyake is an underdeveloped settlement with little or no infrastructure and livelihood opportunities. The community is in dire need of durable solutions, from quality education, to economic empowerment, and connectivity. This is further exacerbated by the limited digital skills and access to mobile technologies which are vital in addressing the communication gaps and providing access to life-saving information. The solution proposed aimed at creating an ICT centre to train and connect refugees and host communities to social networking, livelihoods and education avenues using digital tools that will encourage self-reliance and access to opportunities. The project will provide digital literacy and entrepreneurship courses together with mobile phones and SIM cards to conduct basic mobile learning trainings to refugees and the host communities in Anyake. Expected results included improved ICT skills and greater access to education opportunities and potential income generating activities, greater use of social media and other platforms to maintain family ties and serve as means of community mobilization during program sensitization and awareness exercises, stronger community cohesion and inclusion, improved well-being, safety and security, and self reliance.

Total budget allocated to the project: 20,400

6. Digital literacy for refugees and members of host communities - Caracas, Venezuela

In Caracas, vulnerable groups are severely affected by social and economic crisis and instability. The power of technology has not yet been leveraged to address some of the challenges that displaced populations face in trying to stay connected to their families, access digital services and other opportunities online. UNHCR Venezuela collaborated with partner organisation Soy Mujer to implement digital literacy and technology skills training among the most vulnerable populations and the use of online resources to raise awareness about abuse and exploitation. The project looked at improving access to education and job opportunities through enhanced digital literacy and technology skills, increasing use of social media as a tool to prevent any form of abuse of exploitation, and enhancing communication with families and friends living abroad thus improving psychological well-being and resilience.

At the time this report was written, UNHCR Venezuela and partner organisation Soy Mujer had launched a training program in Caracas that ran every Saturday from September through December 2018 for a total of 64 hours. An initial group consisting of 31 refugees and members of host community benefited from the digital literacy training and had the chance to improve their ICT skills and knowledge about information management on the internet. Two awareness sessions were also conducted on the protection risks associated with the use of technologies, such as human trafficking, abuse and exploitation.

Total budget allocated to the project: 7,830 USD

THE PROCESS

There is a general impression that digital solutions are effective, fast and immediate. While sometimes this can be true, in the humanitarian sector the process of implementing them and seeing the first results is often some way from having these same qualities. Instead the effects of a humanitarian connectivity intervention aimed at communities are gradual, extended and spread out over time. As many of the Community Connectivity Fund projects have shown over the five-month implementation period improving or upscaling infrastructure or bringing in new digital solutions and technologies is often a matter of procurement and administrative delivery. Impact is a much more complex issue that isn't derived from delivery of products or services, but how they are implemented. With every digital intervention or change, comes a time for this change to happen and for end-users to adopt and adapt (either to the new solution or the idea to their needs).

For this reason and at this stage of the fund, looking at results only without considering the overall process would cause us to miss out on some of the greatest lessons that are intrinsic and peculiar to the process itself so far. At the end of financial year 2018 approximately 89% of the funds allocated had been spent, with a large number of items still waiting for transactions to close. The majority of this expenditure came within the last month of 2018.

We see our mission of improving connectivity and closing the digital gap as a journey made of small steps, all of them equally important and rich in learning and each of them taking us closer to our vision. This however also means that if we were looking at the "connectivity for all" destination only without paying close attention to all stages of the process we would probably, and coincidentally arrive, and not know how we got there. Therefore, in this report we want to spend some time unpacking and reflecting on the process to make sure that, while operations continue to benefit from the extra support of the fund beyond 2018, we as UNHCR Innovation Service and for the future of Connectivity of Refugees also get as many lessons out of it.

WHAT WE LEARNED

SO FAR

Make upfront investments in administering the fund

While some might consider the mechanism set up to administer the fund clunky, having two separate teams involved in applicant selection enabled for a much more diverse selection of perspectives to be brought into the decision process. The additional scrutiny the steering group provided enabled a more nuanced perspective in the assessment and consideration of applications. Even for modest amounts of funding, having dedicated human resources to support the fund was critical in pushing through different parts of the process particularly for more prosaic administrative aspects to delivering financial support. Getting these systems, processes and procedures right - or at least thinking them through - in advance helps ensure that when things start to veer off track, you have suitable mechanisms for course-correction. In hindsight, it would have been useful to go back to steering group after the selection process had been completed in order to keep track of the process, its intended impacts and also to scrutinise and sense-check approaches regarding fund spending. Such a team can bring different perspectives and might be more suited to re-aligning or pivoting an intervention if sufficient progress is not being made, nor sufficient learning garnered.

Start small and use the opportunity to prove your concept

Small investments can make a big difference. Launched relatively late in the course of the year, the fund allowed the selected operations to benefit from extra funding to work on ideas and projects that would otherwise be labelled as not a priority and possibly have no money allocated to them. This is even more true in the context of emergencies and with connectivity being often perceived as a secondary need when compared to food, water, or shelter. What we discovered through the fund is that, even moderate resources can yield important results in the connectivity space. This could even be taken one step further: a hypothesis that could be further tested once all projects have implemented their solutions is that impact was not equally proportional to size of the funding envelope received. As the report is being written, UNHCR Venezuela, who received a relatively small portion of the fund (i.e. 8,000 USD) was the operation furthest forward with implementation over this short reporting period.

Aside from small investments, through the experience of the Community Connectivity Fund we were also reminded of the importance to focus on small scale pilots, tests and experiments rather than fully fleshed-out sophisticated projects and solutions. Starting small in this case allowed for flexibility, adjustments and “learning on the go”, that is learning in the process and through the process. In Guatemala, where the initial plan was to implement three Wi-Fi stations along the migratory route, the team decided at a later stage to start with one Wi-Fi station and test the various ‘unknowns’ and assumptions they had when designing the solution: how many computer / tablet stations are

needed? How many charging stations should be available? Should there be any security system to protect the centres or would it be possible to involve the community instead? How do you create ownership of such space and project?

In hindsight, what we initially thought was a limited budget worked in the end as a good constraint: to do small tests and learn what works and what doesn't, and to come up with creative low-cost but effective solutions that focus on greater impact.

...Go big!

Scaling is always an option, growing a business, doing more, adding pieces is always possible. Provided that things work and that a good solution was found in the first place, and stress-tested as much as possible. The secret with the fund was to find a balance between the two aspects: small investments, pilots and tests versus big results, a big impact and a big vision.

In concrete, going big for the fund meant two main things: 1) thinking about the future and long-term plan for the project to make sure that the solution can become sustainable and continue after the initial implementation and disbursement of funds, and 2) allocating sufficient time to Field Operations for support, technical guidance, mentoring and capacity building whether on specifications for equipment, sourcing manufacturers or reviewing documentation.

The idea of small experiments rather than large pilots was successfully adopted by the applicants: in Guatemala, the first Wi-Fi hotspot will be tested in one location and based on the lessons learned the idea will be brought to two other locations. As a matter of fact, there are many moving parts on which the success of the project are dependent, from community uptake, to the support of local municipalities, to UNHCR's successful data management and monitoring new events and trends in regards to displacement.

Trust the process, and understand that change takes time

Due to the fund placing a strong emphasis on results and impact from the outset, the urge is there to rush the process and jump to conclusions, wanting to measure results even before knowing what they can look like. Yet, change takes time and there can be moments in a project implementation cycle when we feel that nothing is happening: the time between a protection desk being created and the time when refugees start feeling comfortable about sharing their information, feedback, and feeling empowered (see Uganda), or the time between building a connected centre and bringing in internet connectivity and the time when people actually start using it and seeing its benefits (Mauritania).

This change is far from being linear and sometimes the connections between activities, outputs and outcomes are far from being explicit. Is a greater sense of safety among vulnerable youth a result of the digital campaign to raise awareness around protection issues in Venezuela? Is greater dignity and self-reliance a direct effect of replacing cash interventions with digital money in Côte d'Ivoire?

...But how do we know if change is happening and why it's happening? This brings us to the next point: measuring impact.

Measure it!

We have stressed in the initial part of this report how the process is as important as the results and that both deserve equal attention. Now, in the connectivity and humanitarian innovation space, we are yet to develop and adopt common connectivity indicators, aligned to overall humanitarian developments in the connectivity space, that can allow us to better grasp the change that connectivity brings.

For the first Community Connectivity Fund our approach to measuring impact has been experimental and the fund has been an opportunity to think about key criteria or standards that can be applied to connectivity interventions and helped us in the process of selecting which applications to the fund were most promising and should be taken forward. The criteria agreed upon looked at the type of solution proposed, its concept and approach (1); how critical and urgent the challenge addressed was (2); involvement and participation of refugees and host communities in the project design and implementation (3); feasibility of the solutions proposed (4); anticipated impact and positive effect on persons of concern (5); the sustainability of the project, its potential to be owned, maintained, or scaled up over time (6).

1	CONCEPT	Effectiveness / Efficiency of the planned solutions and approaches to connect refugees and under-connected groups (for instance elderly, disabled etc.)	How has the project contributed to inclusion by connecting refugees and, more specifically, underconnected populations (for instance elderly, disabled etc.)?
			To what extent have refugee communities and marginalised groups been supported through the initiative?
			How well did the planned activities contribute to attaining their objectives?
			What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non achievement of the objectives?
2	CRITICALITY	Criticality and urgency to solve the challenge	To what extent has the project contributed to solving some of the pressing issues and challenges identified in the proposal?
			What other challenges still need to be addressed? Have new challenges emerged during the course of the project, and if so have they been tackled or considered/included in the project roll-out?

3	REFUGEE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT	Participation by persons of concern and host communities in the design and implementation of the project	To what extent was the community consulted and involved prior, during and after implementation? (give concrete examples)
			Has there been instances where refugees opinions and feedback have required any changes during the project implementation and, if so, how did this reflect in the project implementation?
4	FEASIBILITY	Probability of success in achieving the desired results, including potential risks	To what extent has the project achieved its goals so far? What has not been achieved yet and what goals have changed (if any) in the course of the project implementation?
			What new challenges and risks have emerged and how were these mitigated?
5	IMPACT	Anticipated positive effect on persons of concern to UNHCR or the Organization, both immediate outcomes and future impact taking into account increased scalability and transferability	What were the positive and negative changes produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. What has happened as a result of the program or project? What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries? How many people have been affected?
			In what ways has your solution contributed to refugees' wellbeing, sense of connectedness and inclusion? (according to your observations or as per refugees' feedback)
6	SUSTAINABILITY	Potential for the project to be financially mainstreamed, owned/maintained and sustained or scaled up over time	What is the future of the project once funding from UNHCR Innovation is used?
			What is the type of engagement and buy-in from the communities, from UNHCR staff and senior management?
			How are the activities related to the project continuing after the implementation phase? What are the major factors which influence the achievement or non achievement of sustainability of the project in the future?

This framework and criteria proved useful in evaluating the proposals to the fund. However, the extent to which the connectivity impact of the projects can be measured by the same is yet to be tested. Again, we are keen on experimenting and learning and we look forward to the next progress reports that will allow us to gauge how far these projects have gone and how suitable our measurement framework is when it comes to capturing change.

Grow the connectivity network

Across the fund's projects and countries it has become clear that collaborations and buy-in from different stakeholders is key. Existing funding allocated to a project is in fact not a guarantee that everything will run smoothly. There are deadlines to be met, there is communication that has to keep flowing, and initiatives that need to be pushed forward, supported, and monitored closely. While there are always avenues for getting the technical expertise required (whether through us or a partner!) it is very important to have a dedicated team or focal point on the ground to take the lead and push their connectivity intervention forward to completion.

Remote project management

Manage remotely but don't rely on (unstable) connectivity alone to make things happen. Build rapport, try to connect and understand the context through regular calls that fit the tone and dynamic of the operation you're working with. Working in volatile situations means being prepared for change: In Guatemala, the migrant caravan heading to Mexico in October 2018 suddenly created a new emergency situation that slowed down the implementation of the Community Connectivity fund but also exacerbated the connectivity needs of the communities affected making the solution more pertinent.

MAKING CHANGES

Start earlier

Time has been an important factor in the roll-out of the fund and a decisive one in regards to spend-down deadlines. The feedback received from most operations implementing the fund was that the timeframe between the announcement of allocation of funds (end of August 2018) and the requisition and procurement deadlines (mid December 2018) was too short and posing several challenges due to the fact that the fund's activities overlapped with some of the major end-of-year deadlines. As we wrap up this first fund and think about the future, we can consider a launch earlier in the year as a way to test the assumption that more time would result in greater implementation levels and deadline compliance.

Linked to this is the fact that some applications were at different stages of an idea process. Those who had something more fleshed out were more easily able to move forward while others needed to go through absolutely valid aspects of building out the concept i.e. engaging with the community, scoping alternatives. In future, we will aim to be more cognisant of the stage at which proposals land on the fund desk.

Encourage cross-collaboration

A panoply of partnerships is key to many connectivity-related initiatives: governments, private-sector companies, humanitarians, refugees and host communities need to work hand in hand to create adequate solutions that are sustainable and efficient. These partnerships require time and resources: something that we seemed to be running short of in the course of the fund. However, it is

important to stress the need to start involving partners and stakeholders early on, strengthen efforts in advocacy and building a solid network for connectivity related projects to ensure that these are not de-prioritised, but instead re-prioritised, in times of emergencies.

Encourage feedback and communication

Learning and improving is crucial to what we do and who we are as Innovation Service. Operations were encouraged throughout the fund to have regular check-ins, and open conversations with the team but there is also a need to understand that this can be time consuming and experienced more as a burden rather than a support. To find a better way to support operations in their work we have designed a simple feedback survey that all applicants will fill in next year to reflect on their experience of the fund, and how we can improve that.

Consider the implications of the nature of your engagement

With different recipients of the fund there were different levels of engagement from the Innovation Service. Some received extensive phone support, some needed very little support, while others received missions and extensive guidance as to the implementing of the project. Each of these approaches had pros and cons and an impact on the service. Building on the previous Innovation Fund, it was noted that the more engaged the Service is in project design and delivery - and critically the more time it spends with the operation - the more they will rely on this support to move things forward, which ends up taking up a large amount of resources from within the Service.

On the flip side of this, this extended support in guiding through a solution and implementation builds the capacity of the different staff members involved. They learn through doing and end up with stronger projects with additional buy-in through this exercise. It is too early to say more at this stage but as we see impact through project delivery, we can unpack more in the final report.

For the next iteration a more clear determination of what level of support (and the nature of it) should be provided should be part of the decision process, with a more measured determination on this based on the realities of the operation and a fund application.

More flexible money disbursement

One of the main constraints of the fund was in relation to some of the financial modalities. Rather than transfer funding directly to operations, the Innovation Service retains budgetary control and accountability of delivery of the fund i.e. spending the amount we have budgeted in our financial year. Due to the late start of the fund - essentially end of August - it was difficult to ensure timely spend-down before the end of the year. Procurement processes were delayed and requisition processes didn't always lead to competitive quotations. In future beginning earlier in the year will help us with timelines. In terms of modalities, tighter spending and reallocation timelines, as well as utilising data on spending to inform allocation will be greater taken into account. These would also be prepared in advance and clearly understood by both grant-maker and recipient. While this covers some components, there are many other things to consider and as always, we are keen on doing things differently and finding solutions where we see challenges.

CONCLUSIONS

What's coming next? After having ensured that operations have been able to complete the procurement process in December 2018, during the first three months of 2019 we are hoping to see greater implementation levels across all projects and be able to draw conclusions at the end of the first quarter. Between now and then, we will continue to monitor activities and provide technical and administrative support and guidance to the operations. In 2019 we hope to expand these efforts with a similar fund to leverage the different capabilities of refugees and local humanitarian staff to tackle some of these challenges, building off the lessons learned through this process, allowing us to scale the ambition of what we can achieve with the fund and the impact this will have for refugees and hosting populations.



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