<u>**Side Event Summary**</u>
'Harnessing Innovation for the Needs of Crisis-Affected People'
June 6, 2016 | UNHQ | New York, NY

Summary of Discussion:

Andrew Billo (UNOCHA) moderated a panel of four speakers from the private and non-profit sectors. The panel discussed the importance of innovation and cross-sector collaboration in humanitarian response. Panelists included Keith Chibafa of World Vision International, David Goodman of NetHope, Sasha Kapadia of MasterCard and Andrew Lamb of Field Ready.

Key Themes:

- **Scaling Innovation**
  The culture of humanitarian organizations isn't always set up to embrace innovation. To win support, the innovating team must engage internal stakeholders and communicate the value of the innovation – what it does, why it's an improvement, and how it drives the mission of the organization forward. World Vision spoke about the scaling process behind Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS), a digital registration service they developed that lets users track the distribution of benefits. The LMMS team engaged others in the organization to explain how the platform increases transparency and accountability by measuring service delivery. The panel emphasized the need to bring more innovations past the pilot stage and into sustainable business models.

- **Collaboration between the Public, Private, and Non-profit Sectors**
  Public-private partnerships can be mutually beneficial, but both sides must bridge the "trust gap." MasterCard discussed their goal of bringing 500 million new people into the formal financial system by 2020. Working toward that target means linking with development actors and building sustainable infrastructure. NetHope talked about their work in connecting the technology and NGO sectors by communicating needs and potential solutions between the two. The panel noted the challenge of pushing NGOs to "think digitally" and embrace technology solutions. Technology innovation can also link the non-profit and public sectors. For example, cash transfer programming can be tied to government social safety nets.

- **Changing Attitudes**
  Donors should recognize the necessity of failure in innovation. NGOs tend to be very risk-averse, which stifles innovation. Organizations can encourage innovation by becoming more nimble and more willing to adopt the Silicon Valley ethos of failure as a badge of honor. Conversely, technology companies sometimes underestimate the amount of commitment required to have social impact. A product is often only the starting point for a larger conversation about how to participate in the world of humanitarian response. That level of commitment isn't trivial and is often more than private sector companies are prepared for. The panel also emphasized the need to reduce duplication of effort in the field. Institutional egos often result in "not invented here" syndrome, where outside

solutions are ignored in favor of developing something in-house. Institutions must avoid creating anything before making sure it doesn't already exist and adopt a mindset of reusing when possible.

- **Localization**
  Innovation frequently happens in the field. There's a great amount of talent among local staff and within smaller organizations; these organizations often find it difficult to interface with larger systems. The humanitarian system must find ways to empower these smaller actors. Field Ready presented the idea of Makernet, an "internet of production" that allows local staff to create solutions together across a common network. Field Ready promotes solutions to supply-chain problems, including the use of 3d printing to create tools, spare parts and medical equipment such as umbilical cord clamps. Inclusiveness is also limited by scarce resources – it's often too expensive for smaller organizations to arrange for visas and flights to attend conferences. One solution is to advocate for the use of more digital communication tools like WhatsApp and Skype.

- **Intellectual Property**
  Technological transfer should be seen as a two-way or network transfer, rather than one-way from developed to developing countries. Governments should adopt policy frameworks that encourage innovation. For example, some states don't recognize 3d printers as something that can be brought through customs. Openness isn't always the answer: patents are also a way of encouraging innovation. There's also a need for standards around responsibility. If a 3d-printed medical part fails, it's unclear who is responsible. Changing policy requires engaging governments directly.

Key Recommendations

- Where possible, adapt products and services created by one organization for the purposes of another.
- Encourage a shift in culture to share resources and prevent duplication of effort. Smaller actors find it difficult to interface with larger institutions.
- Larger organizations can address this by focusing on co-creation rather than one-way transfers of technology.
- The humanitarian community should advocate for greater risk tolerance from donors and for policies that protect local populations without discouraging innovation.

For more information on innovation in the humanitarian sector, please consider writing to Andrew Billo (Billo@un.org) or visiting the website of the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation: www.theGAHI.org.