|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Policy Analysis and Innovation** |  |

# ****2013 Humanitarian Research and Innovation Grant Programme****

OCHA Policy Development and Studies Branch invites applications to its **2013 Humanitarian Research and Innovation Grant Programme**. The purpose of the programme is to encourage and enable original research and writing on issues and trends that relate to humanitarian needs and response.

*Requirements:*

All research projects must be completed within six months, and result in a 20-40 page paper and a possible presentation at an OCHA policy forum. The final papers will be published on the OCHA website.

All projects should be based on original research and be of a reasonable scale, such as examining specific programs or case studies illustrating a specific issue.

* Projects that do fewer things better are preferred.
* Projects will need to specify the exact locations and areas for research to the extent possible, for example the specific town, neighborhood or region.
* Clear goals and a detailed, practical methodology are required.

Field research in countries with humanitarian response activities is strongly encouraged.

The maximum grant payable under this programme is US $4,000. The exact disbursement will be determined by the nature of the work and the total number of selected projects.

*Eligibility:*

The programme is open to individuals of any nationality who are interested in improving humanitarian assistance. Applicants should either have relevant academic credentials, such as an MA or PhD; be currently enrolled in an advanced degree program; or have working experience relevant to their proposal. Applicants proposing field research are generally expected to be residents of that country or to have extensive experience working in that context, as well as relevant language skills. Organizations are not eligible to apply.

*Applications:*

To apply for a grant under this programme, please submit: (1) the application form, including a 3-10 page project proposal and an indicative budget (using the format below); (2) a CV; and (3) a writing sample. Please email your application and supporting documents to ochapolicy@un.org, with “**2013 Humanitarian Futures Grant Programme”** in the subject line. At this time, applications will only be accepted in English. Applications that do not conform to the format outlined below will not be considered.

The application period closes on 15 April 2013.

**2013 RESEARCH THEME**

**Humanitarian Innovation**

For 2013, research projects should fall under the theme of ‘Humanitarian innovation’.

Humanitarian challenges are increasingly more complex and costly and our methods of response increasingly outdated. There is a need to explore, and most importantly apply ideas to transform the nature of emergency response for the next generation.

There are no shortage of innovative ideas for improving humanitarian assistance, but there is a lack of rigorous evaluation and understanding of whether such innovative approaches work, should be replicated and/or how they might be scaled up for wider implementation.

Research proposals are sought that 1) identify a specific gap or problem in humanitarian assistance that requires an innovative approach; 2) identify an innovative solution that is addressing that problem or change; 3) analyse whether/how the solution might be replicated in other contexts and brought to scale; and 3) suggest metrics to measure the benefit of the innovation against an established baseline.

Examples of such humanitarian innovation might fall into the following categories:

* Local, traditional and grassroots approaches to humanitarian challenges
  + Studies that evaluate traditional and new local approaches to humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction and other areas
* New products to support humanitarian response, including
  + New types of technology (both hardware, software or novel uses of existing technology) to support more effective responses.
  + Adaptation of products used in other sectors (military, private sector, etc.) for humanitarian actors and contexts.
* New processes for organising humanitarian relief, including
  + New approaches to coordination and response (e.g. approaches to needs assessment, accountability, communications, monitoring and evaluation, financing, etc.)
  + New approaches to partnerships in the humanitarian system (diaspora groups, religious organisations, private sector etc.)
  + Evaluations of new approaches to using standard humanitarian response tools (CAPs, information management, etc.).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Humanitarian Research and Innovation Grant Programme**  2013 Application |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Applicants details** | |
| **Name:** | Ryan Burns\*; Kenny Meesters. \*=Corresponding applicant |
| **Sex:** | Burns: male; Meesters: male |
| **Nationality:** | Burns: USA; Meesters: Netherlands |
| **Country of residence (if different from Nationality):** | Click here to enter text. |
| **Date of Birth:** | Burns: 06/23/1986; Meesters: 7/28/1983 |
| **Occupation (if student – indicate degree program and area):** | Burns: Student (PhD, Geography), Research assistant; Meesters: Student (PhD, Strategic Management) |
| **Current employer or academic institution:** | Burns: University of Washington, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars; Meesters: Tillburg University |
| **Email:** | Burns: burnsr77@gmail.com; Meesters: k.meesters@gmail.com |
| **Telephone:** | Burns: 859-582-9125; Meesters: +31 6 2462 1391 |
| **Current mailing address:** | Burns: 205 Cosky Drive #14, Marina, CA 93933; Meesters: Pisanostraat 478, 5623 CP Eindhoven, The Netherlands |

Project Proposal:

2013 Theme - humanitarian innovation

background

Emerging and re-emerging technologies, driven by the ever more connected world and new approaches to collecting and processing data, provide new opportunities for humanitarian responders’ to enhance their response to crisis and disaster situations. A combination of technical development, institutional changes, and emerging modes of communication are all facilitating a paradigmatic shift in possible response options. In addition, the accelerating increase in data available online yields new possibilities for information products and systems (Crowley & Chan 2011).   
  
With the rise of volunteer & technical communities (V&TCs) such as the Digital Humanitarian Network (DHN), decision-makers and crisis responders have a new set of tools to aid them in their responses. V&TCs been deployed across the world, including Libya, Samoa, and even New York City, and some claim they have the potential to significantly influence the ways organizations respond to crises. Since at least 2004 with the founding of MapAction, V&TCs have been discovering new contributions to information management and emergency response, and recent innovations have increased the number of uses to which these groups can be put. The DHN has become a leading organization in this process, coordinating some of the most important organizations and providing important insights into how VTCs can be engaged institutionally.  
  
However, while these new technologies and organizational strategies could change disaster management and humanitarianism as we know it, there are few commonly-accepted metrics for evaluating the outcomes of individual projects or long-term impacts. Developing an evaluation framework that applies industry-wide would help responders as well as the DHN improve on their efforts, and advocate their importance to humanitarian response efforts.

Comparative advantage

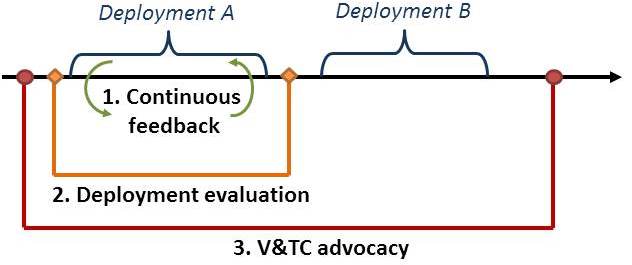
Ryan Burns and Kenny Meesters are both doctoral students in fields related to digital volunteerism. Ryan’s research investigates the ways new digital technologies are influencing disaster relief and humanitarianism. The current research proposal complements his doctoral work by mobilizing his understanding of the field and translating it into a pragmatic tool for the community he studies. Kenny’s research is focused on identifying the information (management) needs of decision makers and the how these needs are met by the supplied information systems and products. The current focus of his research is a collaborative European project, developing a post crisis needs assessment tool, for enhancing reconstruction and recovery for responders.  
 Ryan and Kenny are simultaneously digital volunteers themselves, having served on deployments of Standby Task Force, Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team, and Ushahidi, which are all member organizations of the DHN. Ryan currently works as a research assistant with the Commons Lab of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. At this organization he helped organize the “Connecting Grassroots to Government” workshop, which, with US federal disaster response agencies, academic researchers, and the crisis mapping community, explored ways new technologies are being used in responses. He also wrote a 70-page report on this workshop, which is currently in the final phase of peer review.  
 Kenny has a background in business engineering and as an IT consultant, and has in recent years has become involved in the crisis responders community. He is active as an information management consultant for several humanitarian NGOs and has for example worked on various deployments in Haiti. Furthermore, he is an active member of the ISCRAM (Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management) and part of the organizational committee of the summer school. He also co-developed a serious game used to familiarize scholars with the circumstances faced in the field and to test information systems for crisis responses in a controlled setting. He has published in the proceedings of the ISCRAM conference and Urban Emergencies publication of Delft University of Technology.   
 Both Ryan and Kenny have access to a large network of emergency responders, varying from local emergency services (in both Europe and the United States) and first responders to large international organizations involved in crisis and disaster response. In addition, both researchers have strong professional and personal relationships with V&TC organizations and the DHN. These connections ensure access to the needed data and information. Furthermore a sounding board of experts in the field of disaster response, academia and V&TC will be formed. The sounding board for this project will be tasked with ensuring the quality of the work, the utility of the outcomes and the dissemination of the results. People who have expressed their interest include: Jennifer Chan (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative), Andrej Verity (UN OCHA), Bartel Van de Walle (ISCRAM, Tilburg University), and Mikel Maron (Humanitarian OpenStreetMap).  
 While Ryan and Kenny will contribute equally to the proposed research project, Ryan will serve as the point of contact.

Project objectives

Various evaluation frameworks exist, however the frameworks have a strong focus on post-deployment evaluation. There is a lack of studies that evaluate V&TC activities and their impact on humanitarian response, particularly as they unfold in real time. Harvard Humanitarian Initiative’s report “Disaster Relief 2.0”, while not an evaluation study, investigated digital technologies’ role during disasters; it discussed challenges in information sharing and suggested a framework for future learning and collaboration.  The Ushahidi Haiti Project Evaluation was an evaluation of the Ushahidi Haiti Project (UHP) and the consultant team used the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) criteria, surveys and interviews. The study highlighted the relevance of real-time geo-referenced information, but the evaluation was unable to fully determine the impact on affected populations. There were design, methodological and logistical challenges in the evaluation that limited the team’s ability to successfully determine impact.

These studies show that V&TCs have made considerable contributions to the efficiency of information gathering, processing and dispersal, within the context of situational awareness. However, it is difficult to determine the exact impact V&TC entities have made and how this impact could be improved, as there currently is no practical and shared way for these organizations to reflect, evaluate and understand their effects on decision makers. Humanitarian practitioners and V&TCs are asking for better ways to understand the impacts of these initiatives. Current evaluation methods in the V&TC and traditional humanitarian communities are generally retrospective, limited to after-action reviews and summary reports often produced months after the crisis. In contrast, V&TCs often adapt in real time, sometimes making major changes in a single day. A flexible evaluation framework will help V&TCs and humanitarian organizations analyze the impact of their activities and initiatives.

This framework will serve three specific purposes. **First**, it will be used to evaluate the real-time and post-action outcomes of specifically the DHN’s deployment in a particular response. The results of this evaluation will help volunteers and partners within the DHN by providing lessons learned for future improved operations. It will serve as a feedback mechanism to the DHN to demonstrate its value, give the DHN a detailed SWOT analysis#, and give the DHN actionable improvements. **Second**, the framework will be used to evaluate the combined outcomes of DHN, partner organizations, and emergency responders in an individual response. The DHN and decision makers will use the results of these evaluations to extract lessons learned and develop general guidelines and best practices. **Third**, the framework will be used to evaluate DHN effectiveness over several responses. In other words, it will be used to address the *general* impact that the DHN is having on emergency management. This information, in addition to helping the DHN assess the benefits it brings to the table, will help policy and decision makers see the value added by the DHN. These lessons will be helpful in procuring resources and securing advocacy.



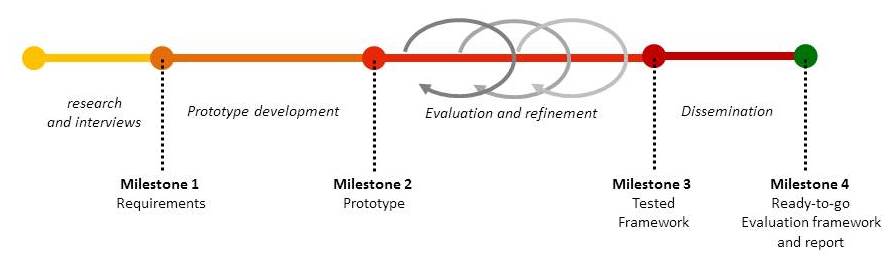
*Fig 1. The various applications of an evaluation framework.*

As illustrated in Figure 1 the evaluation framework, serves a large purpose than ‘simply’ evaluating deployments. The framework will help to facilitate communications (1) between the users of V&TC services, providing continuous feedback between suppliers of information systems and products (the V&TC) and the users (decision makers). This enables the V&TC to, in real-time, adjust the supplied products; at the same time, it allows decision makers to articulate their needs. The results are collected and can be used in in a deployment wide evaluation (2) and help to decide evaluate the overall impact of a V&TC member during the deployment. Consolidating the evaluation results improves the V&TC ability to create a bigger impact in a shorter period of time in the next deployment. It will also help to demonstrate the value of a specific member initiative. Finally those results can be consolidated as well, providing evaluation results for the total volunteer & technical community (3). These outcomes help to demonstrate the importance of the work of the V&TC, and their significance in organizing an efficient and effective crisis response.

Methodology

Our research will take a *grounded theory* approach to the collection and analysis of data. Grounded theory is an approach developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) that involves inductively generating principles and concepts from empirical data. The grounded theory methodological framework specifies rigorous procedures for gathering data from individual interviews, observations, and documents (Strauss & Corbin 1994). After gathering this data researchers then code and analyze the data, drawing connections and contrasts between cases, and then systematically build principles and theories directly from that analysis (Herbert 2010). Recursion is a central principle, as researchers return to their data and research questions continuously in order to refine the principles they are generating (Knigge & Cope 2006). This approach is ideally suited for our project since it is from our data that we will inductively and recursively develop the principles and guidelines that should be measured by an impact/outcomes evaluation framework. These data will be gathered in three stages:  
 1. A literature review,  
 2. Interviews, and  
 3. Deployment testing.  
 Our literature review will explore existing evaluation frameworks, and will note where and how they have been deployed. Here, our goal will be to build on a list of such frameworks to understand the strengths and weaknesses of each and the specific metrics each framework consider the most beneficial and useful for their framework. As our project emphasizes real-time data gathering and evaluation, in our literature review we will purposely seek out either frameworks that have been deployed in real-time, or frameworks that could easily translate to this context.  
 After we have reviewed existing frameworks we will conduct a series of interviews that will help us understand which metrics, qualities, and benchmarks we should include in our evaluation framework. Interviews will be conducted in English. We will target 2 broad groups of people in our interviews:  
 1. Volunteers within the DHN, and  
 2. Staff within emergency/humanitarian response agencies.   
 As active members, we are already connected with other individuals in the DHN. We will interview at least 2 key representatives from each of the 12 member organizations. These representatives will be either the founders of those organizations or members of their respective leadership committees (i.e., board of directors or executive team). This would amount to at least 24 total interviews from this population.  
 From the emergency/humanitarian response agencies we will target 2 or 3 decision-makers from 9 agencies, with the aim to conduct a total of around 20 interviews:  
 1. International Committee of the Red Cross (IFRC),  
 2. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA),  
 3. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA),  
 4. European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), World Food Program (WFP),  
 5. World Health Organization (WHO),  
 6. New York City Office of Emergency Management (NYC OEM),  
 7. Dutch Office of the National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism (NCC), and  
 8. Belgium First Aid and Support Team (B-FAST).  
 These organizations have been selected due to their large presence in local, national and international response efforts. This list comprises a variety of scales at which disaster and humanitarian response occur, and thus would increase the robustness of our results. Burns’s doctoral research has connected him with decision-makers at various levels of seniority in each of these organizations. We would rely on these connections as well as our connections with staff at United Nations’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to fulfill the 18 interviews from this group of stakeholders. Furthermore Kenny Meesters’s connections with European decision-makers ensuring our research and the results have an international focus. By ‘decision-makers’ we mean the people who are program leads, and are directing the allocation of human, financial, and aid resources.  
 Interview questions will be oriented toward understanding how impacts and outcomes are currently assessed by the organizations, independent of the DHN’s activity. Questions will tease out the metrics and qualities organizations consider important, and the results the organizations typically consider beneficial. Other questions will seek to understand what has been effective in deploying the DHN. What are the impacts and outcomes that have resulted from DHN involvement, either in a positive or negative sense? How has the level of ‘success’ in a DHN deployment been ascertained? Not all of these response organizations have deployed the DHN. For those that have not, our interviews will aim to understand:  
 1. The reasons the organization has not,  
 2. How impact has been measured by the organization,  
 3. Whether or not our evaluation framework would encourage future deployment, and  
 4. How our impact evaluation might be made more useful in the hypothetical event of such a deployment.   
 Each of these interviews will be transcribed verbatim, and analysis will be aligned with the precepts of grounded theory. The data will be coded, which entails identifying themes and ideas common across multiple data. Our coding work will direct particular attention toward the dominant *metrics*, *outcomes*, and *characteristics* interviewees identify as desirable. These codes will be used to identify dominant patterns, as well as connections and contrasts between interviewees’ responses.  
 The first round of analysis will result in a prototype evaluation framework, which will then be tested in two contexts. First, we will test the framework in a small-scale, quasi-experimental non-crisis situation. This will entail asking 4 people - 2 each from the emergency management community and digital humanitarian communities - to utilize the prototype in relation to an ongoing deployment. This will not be a complete test, but rather a preliminary examination of strengths and weaknesses, and will enable minor edits before the primary testing context. Second, the prototype will be engaged for a full DHN deployment, in a complete test of the prototype. The goal of this test will be to inform the framework with on-the-ground empirical information. Testing it will help us ensure the framework is useful, usable, and attentive to on-the-ground realities. During this step we will collect, in real-time, information regarding the framework’s usefulness, weaknesses, and potential improvements. Our documentation of these factors will be organized in a temporal fashion, from the decision to deploy the DHN to the conclusion of the project, in order to nuance our analysis for each stage of the DHN deployment. Temporal analysis will ensure real-time evaluation is effective. During and after the deployment we will interview:  
 1. Members of the DHN who lead their side of the deployment,  
 2. Directors of the response efforts, and  
 3. The decision-makers who decided to deploy the DHN.  
 These interviews will be oriented toward finding the aspects of the framework prototype that worked well, and the aspects that did not. We will then adjust the framework prototype based on information from these coded interviews. The goal will be to improve the utility of the framework in such a way that will encourage further use, and increased trust in DHN deployments. This step aligns with grounded theory’s emphasis on recursive analysis, where multiple iterations increase the overall rigor of the analysis. Recursion will also likely improve the quality and usability of our final products.  
 To test our evaluation framework we can connect to planned exercises of the V&TC and/or crisis response teams. Over the summer the Belgian First Aid and Support Team (B-FAST) will conduct 2 exercises, one of which will be focussing on information management and decision making. Furthermore the TRIPLEX exercise, a regular, IHP-run, full-scale simulation exercise, enabling a range of humanitarian actors to practice their response mechanisms in a sudden-onset natural disaster scenario, could provide another option to test the framework. Finally the V&TC, through outreach, will be asked to inform us about opportunities, either exercises or live deployments that will always to test the evaluation framework.  
 There will be 2 final outputs from this project. The first will be a robust and comprehensive evaluation framework that caters to response agencies’ and the DHN’s needs. The second will be a 20-40 page report that documents the process by which the framework was developed. This report will be published on the OCHA website, and in shorter segments on the DHN blog and community listservs. The framework will be made publicly and freely available on the DHN website under a CC BY-SA Creative Commons license.

Proposed Timeline

Throughout the research we define different stages to accomplish the objectives. The work outlined below is distributed between two project members, supported by additional staff for specific tasks (outlined in budget). One project member is based in Europe (Netherlands) and the other in the United States (Washington), this allows the work to be conducted in different timezones. *Fig 2. Project outline, the circles illustrate the iterative approach in refining the evaluation framework.* **1st stage\*** Review existing frameworks and literature (1 month)   
 In the first stage a literature review is used to list, examine and compare existing evaluation frameworks and approaches. This literature review will not only help to identify the current existing frameworks but also to find the design principles behind these evaluation methods. The final deliverable at the end of this stage is an overview of existing frameworks applicable to information systems used in humanitarian responses.  
 A large part of the work in this stage can be done independently and the risk for delays is minimal, the expected timeframe for this review is one month.  
 **2nd stage\***     Requirement analysis and interviews (1.5 month)  
 In the second stage we will examine the specific requirements of the involved stakeholders. In contrast with the first stage, during the part of the research active outreach to various stakeholders is used to gather requirements for an evaluation framework. The stakeholders to be interviewed are divided in two groups, those who are (potentially) using information systems and products and those who supply the information products. For both these groups will we use the aforementioned methodology to uncover the requirements. The final deliverable of this stage is an overview of the requirements for an evaluation framework. Along with these requirements the specific scope and high-level design will be used in the next stage to develop a prototype.   
 **3rd stage** Develop prototype impact evaluation framework (1.5 months)  
 The third stage will be devoted to developing a prototype evaluation framework and identifying an ideal DHN deployment in which to test it. In accordance with the above methodology, this stage will involve coding the initial interviews and inductively building the metrics necessary for our evaluation framework. The deliverable at the end of this stage will be an evaluation framework that is ready to be tested in the field. This stage is an important aspect of the project as it ensures the final deliverables will be usable by the V&TC and can be embedded in the organization and processes during deployments.  
 **4th stage** Evaluate and refine prototype (1 month)  
 We aim to test our prototype evaluation framework in a real-time DHN deployment. This stage will involve real-time data collection on how impact and success are being determined at various times throughout the deployment, combined with how they are determined after the deployment. Our data collection here will be comprised of recording the benefits, weaknesses, and needs of our prototype; some of this data will come from conversations with the parties involved, as detailed above. Finally, we will return to the prototype and adjust it based on the outcomes of this test. The final deliverable for this stage will be an adjusted and improved final evaluation framework.  
 **5th stage**    Report (1 month)  
 The last stage will consist of writing a report that details the research process and describes the resultant impact and outcomes evaluation framework. This report will be published in a peer-reviewed journal, as well as publicized via numerous media. Finally, using network opportunities and existing channels we aim to disseminate the product and evaluation framework to the V&TC. An important channel is to present the framework at the International conference of crisis mappers (ICCM), the main conference where most V&TC organizations meet.   
  
\*Note: stage 1 and 2 can be worked on simultaneously.

Budget

*Budgets should be as detailed as possible. Note that OCHA will generally not cover international flights and travel expenses, expect in exceptional circumstances, such as for students who are studying abroad who need support to return to their home countries to conduct field research, or for regional travel and projects. Budgets should indicate approximate cost in US$, although please indicate the currency and exchange rate you are using. Budgets may be attached as a separate document.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Budget outline Impact Evaluation framework** | **Cost (USD)** |
| **Staff expenses**   * 2 Research assistants  *To conduct and transcribe interviews 18 interviews, 30 minutes interview time+1 hour transcribing time totals 27 hours. To complete in 1 month 2 staff members are required.* * Web developer   *As we aim to provide the framework as an online application (SAAS) we need a developer to transform our framework into an online application. This could be a student, the work would take about a month.*   * Graphical designer   *Aesthetically pleasing documents and materials aid in the dissemination of the framework (professional look).  A student designer will be asked to format the final deliverables in consistent and effective style. Includes design of diagrams and models.* | $ 950    $ 1000    $ 200 |
| **Equipment, utensils, materials**   * Conference calls with recording options   *The interviews will be mostly conducted online but are a key factor in ensuring the framework aligns with the users’ needs. Therefore proper equipment is needed to conduct and record the interviews. I.e. conference call system and budget for remote calls*   * 1 year of web hosting   *For our application we need a server or web hosting to provide access to the V&TC. Initially the application can be developed on own (sponsored) server but during the dissemination needs to be transferred to a reliable environment.*   * Software licenses   *The exact costs depend on the chosen platform. We aim to have these costs sponsored by software companies (Microsoft Dreamspark)* | $ 50     $ 200    $ 0 |
| **Reimbursements**   * Organise local exercises *To test our evaluation framework we organize ‘local’  (i.e. one in Europe and one the USA) trials with local agencies. The costs cover (local) travel expenses and one or two nights of accommodation.* * Connect to ongoing responses *To asses the usefulness of impact evaluation framework we want to connect to ongoing responses and deploy our framework. This can be done online and would require no additional expenses, any other costs will be covered in collaboration with the responding agencies.* * Travel to (local) conferences, meetings *To aid in the dissemination of our products we want to connect to meetings of the V&TC community, mainly the ICCM conference, the main conference where a lot of the V&TC members attend.* | $ 800  $ 0    $ 550 |
| * **Total** | $ 3750 |

*Sample budget:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **OCHA Humanitarian Research and Innovation Grant Programme** | **Cost in US$ (9687 Rupia/1$)** |
| Personnel (for hiring research assistant @ $, 300 1 person in each province) | 600 |
| Equipment (survey material, duplication of documents, writing utensils, etc.) | 600 |
| Other research materials  1) UCINET Social Network Analysis software – Student license @ $ 50  2) Atlas.ti Qualitative Data Analysis software @ $ 670 | 720 |
| Accommodation (4 weeks, in West Java & West Sumatra province) | 795 |
| Local Transportation (Roundtrip Airfare for Jakarta – Padang City, Ground transportation in West Java and West Sumatra province) | 350 |
| **Total** | **3,065** |

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Who is eligible to apply?**

The programme is open to individuals of any nationality who are interested in improving humanitarian assistance. Applicants should either have relevant academic credentials, such as an MA or PhD; be currently enrolled in an advanced degree program; or have working experience relevant to their proposal. Applicants proposing field research are generally expected to be residents of that country or to have extensive experience working in that context, as well as relevant language skills. Organizations are not eligible to apply.

**What is the maximum age I can be when I apply?**

For 2013, there is no set age limit, but proposals from young research and early-career professionals under 35 will be prioritized.

**Are group proposals allowed?**

Grant proposals may be submitted by a team of applicants of up to 4 people. The maximum grant for a single application is $4000, regardless of whether the proposal comes from an individual or group. The proposal should identify a clear lead person, who will also be the focal point for disbursement of payments.

**Can institutions or organizations submit applications?**

No. The grants are intended for individuals or groups of individuals. If individuals wish to work in conjunction with an organization or institution they are free to do so and should indicate this in the project proposal. However, the grant agreement is solely between the individual and OCHA. The grants are intended to support original research related to humanitarian issues and are not intended to be used as partial funding for ongoing projects or programming.

**How many applications can I submit?**

Only one application can be submitted per person or group. People who are submitting an application as part of a group or team may not submit a separate proposal as an individual.

**What type of projects will OCHA support?**

The grant is for research that relate to the future of the humanitarian system. The grants are not intended to support implementation of projects.

**What range of topics is allowed?**

All topics must relate to one of the thematic areas, although we encourage creative interpretation of what applies. All projects should have relevance to improving the effectiveness of humanitarian response, reducing the impact of natural disaster or conflict, or understanding the trends and drivers of humanitarian needs.

**What do you mean by ‘writing sample’?**

For the writing sample, please submit an original piece of writing (and one not edited by anyone else) that demonstrates your ability to clearly explain complex ideas. It should be no more than two pages. This could include an excerpt from an academic paper, report or other article on any topic.

**Can the research project be part of a thesis or existing project?**

The grants are intended to support original research and are not intended to be used as partial funding for ongoing projects or academic research. The proposal may relate to a larger thesis or research project, but the submitted paper must be a unique piece of work able to stand on its own merits within the Grant Programme timeframe. Please specify any relationship to an existing thesis or research project in the proposal.

**When are project expected to start?**

Applicants will have six months from the disbursal of grant funds to produce the final paper. Processing time for the grant agreement will vary depending on individual circumstances.

**What language can the application document and final paper be submitted in?**

At this time, we are only accepting documents written in English; please check the website regularly for updates.

**Do you have to be affiliated with a University to apply?**

No.

**How often can I receive the grant?**

Successful applicants will not be eligible for future grants from this programme.

**Has the grant been given out before?**

Yes. Three winners were chosen in 2012.

**When can I expect to be notified?**

The application process closes on 15 April 2012, and it is expected that winners will be selected and notified within a few months.

**Who retains ownership and copyright of the final paper?**

The writer of the paper will retain ownership and copyright to the research and data, and can use it however they like in the future. OCHA will not retain any rights to the inputs or final product from this research.

**Can the grant be used to cover costs I have already incurred?**

No. All costs should be unique to the project and incurred after the grant is awarded (though not necessarily after the funds are disbursed).

2012 Grant Winners:

**Irwin Lopez (Philippines)**

**Project:**"Increasing Flood Early Warning and Response Capacity through Community Participation: The Cases of Barangays Mangin, Dagupan and Banaba, San Mateo, Philippines".   
**Bio:** Mr. Lopez has an MA in Disasters, Adaptation and Development from King’s College London and an MA in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of the Philippines. He has worked as a researcher for the Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative, the House of Representatives of the Philippines and the Asian Development Bank on the Analysis of Safeguards of ADB Water-Related Projects.

**Shimeles Hailu (Ethiopia)**

**Project:** "Impact of Disaster Risk Management Interventions in Humanitarian programme on Household Food security: The Case of North Wollo Zone, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia.

**Bio:** Mr. Hailu has an M.Sc in Economics (Development policy analysis) from Mekelle University. He has worked at World Vision Ethiopia since 2005 and is currently a Climate Change and Economic Development officer.

**Rosa Akbari (USA)**

**Project:** "Reporting from the Devil’s Garden - SMS reporting systems in Tindouf Refugee camp".

**Bio:** Ms Akbari has worked in governmental, nongovernmental, and startup environments. She was a former coordinator for [RELIEF](http://www.npsrelief.org/), a quarterly field experimentation event that incubates open source technologies for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Her first exposure to humanitarian operations was a week after the Haitian earthquake in 2010; she deployed as part of a six person civil-military unit sent to establish basic communication infrastructures. She has since explored the applications of mobile-based technologies with Sahrawi refugees in southwest Algeria and camel herders in rural Rajasthan. Rosa currently works as a field manager for [Dimagi](http://www.dimagi.com/) in Africa