**Contents**

[Abbreviations ii](#_Toc24658669)

[Introduction 1](#_Toc24658670)

[1.0 Defining Humanitarian Diplomacy 1](#_Toc24658671)

[1.1 The four modalities of Humanitarian Diplomacy 1](#_Toc24658672)

[1.2 Humanitarian Diplomacy in the 21st Century, 2019 3](#_Toc24658673)

[1.3 Humanitarian Law in the light of the 1949 Geneva Conventions 5](#_Toc24658674)

1.4 [The Mechanisms of IHL 6](#_Toc24658675)

[2.0 Innovative technology and humanitarian work 7](#_Toc24658676)

[2.1 Mobile Technology and Humanitarian work 8](#_Toc24658677)

[2.2 How we can improve partnership in Humanitarian work? 10](#_Toc24658678)

[Conclusion 12](#_Toc24658679)

[Reference 14](#_Toc24658680)

# Abbreviations

AU African Union

GAHI Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation

ICRC International Committee of the Red Cross

ICT Information Communication Technology

ID Identity Document

IHL International Humanitarian Law

OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs

Para. Paragraph

R & D Research and Development

UNHCR United Nations Humanitarian Commission for Refugees

UN United Nations

# Introduction

In this study we intend to explore humanitarian diplomacy and its dynamics. Firstly, we shall begin with a brief sketch of the four modalities of humanitarian diplomacy and subsequently explain how it operates. We will then venture into how humanitarianism has evolved in the 21st century and answer the question whether humanitarianism has any ulterior motives or not? Furthermore, we will discuss International Humanitarian Law mechanisms in the light of the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of victims of war. After that, we will highlight the aspect of humanitarianism in relation to technology. Under this discourse, our focus will be on what technology can offer to humanitarianism and the benefits it brings to this practice. Prior to drawing our conclusion, we will briefly engage in a discourse on how we can improve on the existing partnership between humanitarian organisations and institutions of innovative technology, in order to tap the full potential of information technology in humanitarian work. Finally, we will sum it up by giving a resume of the entire essay to give a bird’s eye view to the readers and subsequently raise a few points of reflection on the key issues raised in this research.

# 1.0 Defining Humanitarian Diplomacy

Prior to engaging in this discussion on Humanitarian Diplomacy, its four modalities and how it operates, let us first examine its definition in order to understand its key concepts. Understanding this definition will help us appreciate key terms that jointly make up the whole. This will further lead us to create a good basis in our attempt to decipher the four modalities and how humanitarian diplomacy operates, (Humanitarian Diplomacy Policy, 1999, p. 2)

Humanitarian Diplomacy is defined as, “persuading decision makers and opinion leaders to act at all times, in the interests of vulnerable people and with full respect for fundamental principles”, (Humanitarian Diplomacy, 1999, p. 2). With this definition in view, we can now engage in a discussion on the four modalities of Humanitarian Diplomacy.

# 1.1 The four modalities of Humanitarian Diplomacy

Humanitarian Diplomacy has four modalities which it uses in negotiations. The four modalities are: 1. Direct contact, 2. Indirect Contact, 3. Contact in the field and 4. Traditional & Modern modes of communication. Let us now delineate each modality for the sake of clarity. In the first modality, *direct contact*, it is significant for us to look at this fundamental question: how does humanitarian diplomacy operate using this approach? Scholars like Marion Harrof – Tavel, (2005), an expert on conflict analysis and forecast, affirms that there are two key factors that support direct contact namely: direct negotiation without any agent whatsoever and building a strong relationship, (p 5). These two factors maintain a direct control of the negotiating strategy. Under this approach, Humanitarian Diplomacy consists of contacts with a wide range of interactions including none state Actors or players, (Harrof - Tavel, 2005, p. 5).

Furthermore, this practice is based on continued efforts of negotiations in order to maintain proximity of humanitarian aid workers and societies involved in humanitarian work close to affected vulnerable populations. Apart from that, it is through direct contact that humanitarian Diplomacy seeks the consent of the relevant parties involved in order to allow humanitarian operations to take place. (International Review of the Red Cross, 2011, p. 449).

The other modality which Humanitarian Diplomacy uses is through *indirect contact*. This is a craft of Humanitarian Diplomacy which uses an intermediary often called an agent. In this approach, Humanitarian Organisations ensure that they send an agent to the negotiating table that shares the humanitarian interests of the delegating organization to guarantee that there is no misrepresentation of any sort. This is due to the fact that intermediaries at times can bring their own agenda and interests to the negotiating forum. In this approach, the delegating organization ensures that its interests and objectives are represented in the negotiations, (Mc Hugh & Bessler, 2006, p. 52)

The third approach is called *contact in the field,* where Humanitarian operations take place at respective Headquarters such as Geneva or Brussels, as exemplified in the module, (Module 1, p. 7). A good example we can cite is the International Committee of the Red Cross which conducts its diplomacy from its headquarters in Geneva and from its delegations or mission not all of which are situated in war torn or conflict countries. Some of these are based in Paris, Budapest and Brussels. The ICRC’s Humanitarian operations forge ties with the UN and the AU at times, (Hariof – Tavel, 2005, p. 5).

The fourth mode of operation of Humanitarian diplomacy is through the use of *traditional and modern modes of communication* such as internet and TV. Under the traditional approach, Humanitarian diplomacy capitalizes on the existing traditional forms of communication such as theatre while under the modern modes of telecommunication it utilises modern forms of telecommunication such as TV, mobile technology and other innovative systems and devices of technology, (Module 1, p. 7).

# 1.2 Humanitarian Diplomacy in the 21st Century, 2019

Having discussed the four modes of humanitarian diplomacy and how it operate, let us tackle the question of humanitarianism in the 21st century. The question whether Humanitarianism has any ulterior motives or not is vital in this discourse because there are protracted opinions surrounding this topic. To begin with, the answer to the question – has humanitarianism evolved with time? – can be given in the affirmative yes. However, we owe an explanation to the readers as we tackle this question and to do this we turn to Gelsdorf Kirsten, whose report on Global Challenges and their Impact on Humanitarian Action serves vital for our engagement here. Let us begin by defining the term Global challenges.

Gelsdorf, (2010), defines ‘Global challenges’, as, “any major trend, shock or development that has the potential for serious global impacts and thus to create humanitarian needs and change the environments in which humanitarian actors will operate in coming years”, (p. 4). Without going into full details about these global challenges, a list of them will do, to elaborate more on this topic. They include: climate change, extreme poverty and inequality, financial and economic crisis, food crisis, water scarcity, energy security, population growth, migration and demographic shifts, urbanization and Health pandemics and infectious diseases to mention but a few, (Gelsdorf, 2010, pp. 3 – 4).

Furthermore, these anticipated global challenges do not just create a need for humanitarian response, nevertheless, their interconnectedness and intersection of any of them raise significant vulnerability and humanitarian needs. In addition to that, the scale at which global challenges occur have contributed to the way humanitarianism has evolved in the 21st Century, (Gelsdorf, 2010, p. 3)

In the last few years scientists have been warning us about global warming. In as much as some politicians are denying the reality of this phenomenon, e.g., President Donald Trump of the US, the effects are obvious and are being felt all over the globe. For example the recent crises in the outskirts of cities like Harare – Zimbabwe and Mogadishu, Somalia have already illustrated uncontrolled urbanization. This reality was triggered by climate related diseases, skyrocketing fuel prices, environmental degradation which all impacted on food, health and environmental security of communities. It is not only the individual presence of these phenomena but at times a combination of them that create extreme vulnerability and the need for life saving emergency assistance, (Gelsdorf, 2010, p. 5).

With every increase in the need for humanitarian assistance comes with the challenges of logistics, financial transfers and deployment of personnel to attend to vulnerable and displaced populations. Furthermore, countries, regions and even the global community may lack the capacity, knowledge, financial resources, institutional framework and good governance systems to respond to these potential global challenges, (International Review of the Red Cross, (2016, p. 445).

However, the essence of Humanitarianism, based on its fundamental principles, remains unchanged, despite the impact of global challenges on Humanitarianism, (Pictet, 1979, p. 6). Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross puts it well in his speech at the Inaugural ceremony of the *Maison de la Paix* in Geneva on the 2nd October, 2014, when he reiterated the relevance and significance of the fundamental Humanitarian Principles and further cautioned the lack of common understanding as well as politicising these principles which have the potential to undermine the scope and scale of Humanitarian action, (International Review of the Red Cross, 2016, p. 445).

Looking at international news today, one will spot out one fact in view of Maurer’s position in his admonitory speech. It is not so much of the actors or Humanitarian aid workers who alter these principles but the influence of parties involved – armed groups to be specific, (International Review of the Red Cross, 2016, p. 445). These parties either violate the fundamental principles of humanitarianism or simply coerce organisations to deviate from their missions of operations, especially in war tone zones, as described in Martin’s (2005 – 2015), video.

The question we need to attend to at this point is: does humanitarianism have any ulterior motives? In principle, we can say yes and no at the same time, depending on the point of view one is looking at humanitarian response. Even though International Organisations are guided by the Fundamental Humanitarian Principles of impartiality, humanity, independence and neutrality, (Pictet, 1979, p. 4), there are still other exterior factors that sip through and impact on humanitarian action.

Let us usher in another element in view of the question raised above. According to Antonio Donini, (2010), Humanitarianism in the 21st century is rather tense with ambiguities, (p. 1). He postulates three separate but overlapping realities: ideology, movement and profession. Antonio argues that together these phenomena form what he calls a ‘political economy’ in which actors compete for influence, space and market share. From Antonio’s perspective, (2010), one can affirm that, yes humanitarianism has ulterior motives, (p. 1).

On the other hand, we need to bear in mind that the essence of Humanitarianism which consists in protection of lives, provision of basic needs such as food, water, health services and other items of assistance, provided for the benefit of the vulnerable in order to facilitate the smooth return to normal lives, overrides any other agenda and there by justifies the call for this noble cause, (Humanitarian Policy Group Report, 2018, p. 9). Hence, from this point of view, we can affirm that humanitarianism as such has no ulterior motives. It is the humanitarian players and actors, with ill motives who apparently deviate from the essence of this noble phenomenon, as stated in Martin’s (2005 – 2015) video.

Having discussed the question of humanitarian action in the 21st century, let us now turn to the International Humanitarian Law in the light of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. To begin this discourse we need first to understand what Humanitarian Law is.

# 1.3 Humanitarian Law in the light of the 1949 Geneva Conventions

The IHL has undergone evolutionary changes to reach where it is today. From a historical point of view, it was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that nations agreed on international rules to avoid needless suffering in wars. Furthermore, the changing character of armed conflict and the destructive potential of modern weapons have made necessary many revisions and extensions of humanitarian law in long and patient negotiations, (Fact sheet no. 13, 1991, para. 2)

In addition to that, there are three main currents which have contributed to the making of IHL. These currents are: the law of Geneva, represented by the international Conventions and Protocols established under the aegis of the International Committee of the Red Cross, with the protection of the victims of conflict as their central concern; the law of the Hague, based on the results of the peace conferences in the capital of the Netherlands in 1899 and 1907, which dealt principally with the permissible means and methods of war; and the efforts of the United Nations which ensured that Human rights are respected in armed conflicts and limited the use of certain weapons. Essentially, these three currents have converged to form one torrent of action, (Fact Sheet no. 13, 1991, para. 11)

With this historical background, we can now zero in on the definition of IHL, in order to set foundation for our discussion on its mechanisms. The IHL is defined as a regulatory system that forms a major part of public international law and comprises the rules which in times of armed conflict, aims at protecting people who are not/are no longer taking part in aggressions of any sort, and further seeks to restrict the methods and means of warfare employed, (International Humanitarian Law, 2002, p. 4).

From another perspective, the glossary on Humanitarian terms defines it as: a body of rules that seek, for humanitarian reasons, to limit the effects of armed conflict, (ReliefWeb Glossary of Humanitarian Terms, 2008, p. 33). Hence, we notice that the essence of Humanitarian Law is to protect individuals who are not or are no longer participating in the hostilities and restricts the means and methods of warfare by prohibiting weapons that make no distinction between combatants and civilians or weapons and methods of warfare which cause unnecessary injury, suffering and damage, (International Humanitarian Law, 2002, p. 4).

This law is a principle instrument of the 1949 Geneva conventions and their additional protocols of 1977, (ReliefWeb Glossary of Terms, 2008, p. 33). To discuss the mechanisms of this law we need to employ the documents that expound on this law especially those issued by the ICRC, (International Humanitarian Law, 2002, p. 4)

# 1.4 The Mechanisms of IHL

In discussing the mechanisms of IHL, we need to understand that it is apparently a branch of the Public International Law and as such, it consists of rules that aim at protecting individuals who are not taking part in hostilities, (Advisory Service on International Humanitarian Law, 2004, pp. 1 – 2). These rules are international in character established by treaty or custom, which are specifically intended to solve humanitarian problems directly arising from international or non-international armed conflict, (Inter Agency Standing Committee, 2004, p. 5). In other words IHL, consists of international treaty law and international customary rules, (International Humanitarian Law Handbook, 2016, p. 8). This leads us to the question on how IHL operates or rather the mechanisms of IHL?

One way IHL applies in bringing about protection is that it employs international customary rules to protect persons who are not or are no longer taking part in hostilities. Secondly, it uses these rules, to restrict the means and methods of warfare. In other words the principal aim of these rules is to resolve humanitarian issues that arise directly from armed conflict whether of an international or a non-international character. (International Humanitarian Law Handbook, 2016, p. 8).

Apart from that, IHL uses these international treaty or custom rules as instruments to protect individuals and property that are or may be affected by armed conflict. (Inter Agency Standing Committee, 2004, p. 4). The other mechanism IHL uses to protect individuals in a conflict context is to limit the right of the parties to a conflict to use approaches and means of warfare of their choice. By virtue of its authority, IHL imposes upon states to respect its demands and prescriptions, (Inter Agency Standing Committee, 2004, p. 4). Let us now move on to the aspect of Humanitarian work and the phenomenon of innovative information technology.

## 2.0 Innovative technology and humanitarian work

To discuss humanitarian work vis-à-vis innovative information technology, we need to bring into focus three key aspects, as outlined in the module no. one: 1) what technology offers to humanitarian work 2) The benefits it offers to humanitarian work 3). How we can improve partnership to tap into the full potential of information technology in carrying out humanitarian tasks, (Module 1, p. 73).

Firstly, there is no doubt that the Humanitarian sector has equally benefited from the incentives modern technology offers. Essentially, modern technology has invigorated recruitment of volunteers on a global scale. Furthermore, it has cemented the existing relationships between humanitarian organisations and their collaborating partners in improving the quality of life for the vulnerable and displaced populations, (Module 1, p. 54)

This is the reason why humanitarian actors and players have seen the significance of embracing Technological innovation as a way forward to better address the needs of populations affected by Humanitarian disasters. At the world Humanitarian summit of 2016, former UN General Secretary Ban- Ki Moon urged the global community to commit to the ‘Agenda for Humanity’ to address the challenges in the humanitarian sector with the aim of mitigating and preventing human suffering during crises. Innovative information technology was highlighted as an enabler in achieving this objective, (Technological Innovation for Humanitarian Aid and Assistance, 2019, p. 3).

There are three areas we can spell out as we discuss technology’s offer to humanitarian work namely: building resilience, action at local level and early warning systems, (Module 1, pp. 55 – 59).

In building resilience, technology plays a very vital role in putting up early warning systems. This assists communities to endure major catastrophes. Apart from that, technology also brings a lot of benefits to humanitarian action especially in constructing social and economic data. For example in the production of maps which helps a lot in engaging in conversations about public safety and assistance. In the face of major natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes, the investment of million dollar projects such as the Global Alert Coordination systems by the UN has proved very beneficial to humanitarian aid work. We have seen in the recent years that the use of internet facilities such as the web-based information channel run by OCHA, has been very effective in assisting affected countries and bilateral responders that used this system immediately after major natural disasters. (Module, 1, pp. 59 – 60). The above phenomenon is just one among many innovative technological benefits technology is offering to the humanitarian sector.

## 2.1 Mobile Technology and Humanitarian work

There is another area that is worth putting under our spotlight in this discourse in relation to humanitarian work and this area is the area of mobile technology. We can briefly sketch the benefits of mobile technology particularly in emergencies. In 2016, an estimated 65.6 million people were forcibly displaced from their home by natural disasters. Furthermore, from 2000 – 2016, over 3.5 billion people worldwide were affected by natural disasters and humanitarian crises. Mobile technology became a lifeline for people hit by natural disasters. Apart from that, humanitarian aid workers found work a little easier especially in terms of communication using mobile networks, (Granryd, 2018, para. 1).

In addition to the above benefits, there are five more areas that we can point to in highlighting the fundamental benefits of mobile technology, 1. Basic connectivity, 2. Humanitarian Cash transfers, 3. Provision of identity, 4. Access to utilities and 5. Improving dignity, (Granryd, 2018, paras. 3 – 6). As the mobile industry continues to extend its coverage to more than 5 billion people across the globe, individuals are becoming more and more connected worldwide. Mobile technology is now providing services, enabling communication in times of crises. The recent example we can give is the 2015 earthquake in Nepal, the 2016 earthquakes in Italy and the refugee crisis in the Middle East and Europe. These events highlight the epitome of the critical role of innovative mobile technology, (Granryd, 2018, para. 4).

Besides connectivity, we also see the value mobile technology is providing to humanitarian work in times of crises when organisations have to do Humanitarian cash transfers. International Humanitarian Organisations are finding new and increasing efficient ways of delivering aid and assistance, notable through digital cash transfers by means of mobile money facilities, (Granryd, 2018, para. 5).

Another area that has seen the benefits of technology is in the area of beneficiary registration and identification. This is one area where the Humanitarian Community is trying to be more alert due to illegal trafficking of the vulnerable in modern times. Mobile and digital technology are playing a huge role in establishing and authenticating digital identities for refugees and displaced people affected by humanitarian crises. Without IDs refugees face barriers and delays when attempting to cross borders. Through digital technology refugees and displaced people are able to access financial services education, healthcare and other basic needs, (Granryd, 2018, para. 6).

Another area is access to utilities which is made easier today by means of mobile technology. In addition to that, Humanitarian work is using innovative ways to improve access to energy, water and sanitation for millions of people where traditional grid does not extend but are covered by mobile networks, (Granryd, 2018, para. 7).

Under the fifth benefit – improving dignity – basic access to mobile phone has improved choice and dignity, particularly in precarious and highly volatile displacement situations. Mobile technology is helping communities to connect in real time. Furthermore it is essential in emergencies. It is assisting in terms of better communication between affected populations and the humanitarian agencies seeking to serve them. A research in Tanzania reveals that refugees showed a broad range of using their personal phones. They were able to communicate with friends and family. The research further showed that 65% of mobile internet users searched for news and information while 35% used the service to access entertainment, (Granryd, 2018, para. 9).

From the discussion above, on this note we can see that Technology is contributing tremendously to the current humanitarian space, but also as a transformative tool to alter the foundations of humanitarian action. There is no doubt that technological innovation in the domain of humanitarian assistance is definitely facilitating news of addressing humanitarian crises even though at times it raises serious concerns about the protection of the most vulnerable due to privacy and cyber security issues, (Technological Innovation for Humanitarian Aid and Assistance, 2019, p. 11).

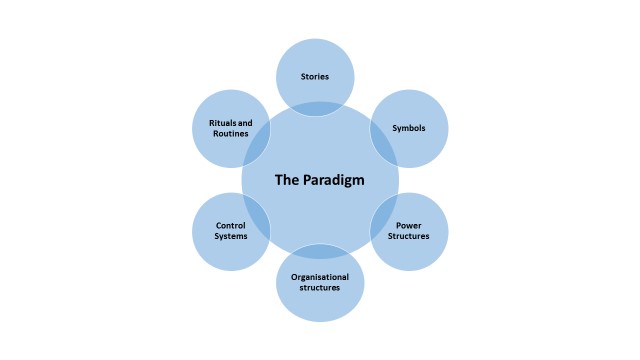
## 2.2 How we can improve partnership in Humanitarian work?

When we raise the topic on partnership in the global world, we need to be aware that partnership is not just collaboration on ad hoc projects. Rather it is about moving beyond responsibility for independent results, to a relationship that involves co-creation, more shared hazards and responsibilities, interdependency and organisational transformation, (PKMG International, 2016, p. 8)

For the past 15 years – in an effort to achieving effective partnership and collaboration – NGOs have focussed much effort on improving co-operation amongst themselves to reduce a multiplication of efforts and wasted resources. Furthermore, they want to promote skilled institutional responses and simplify emergency responses. However, an increase in complexities surrounding humanitarian policy and action, coupled with fundamental global challenges which are associated with climate change and global economic crises, put pressure on the international humanitarian community to engage in collaboration and partnership with companies offering innovative technology in view of improving the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian response, (Janz, Soi & Russell, 2009, para. 1)

However, there are overt obstacles to this cause and one biggest challenge in achieving partnership and cooperation among humanitarian organizations and innovative mobile companies is the existing gaps in communication. The basic question we should ask is: where can we begin from in our attempt to improving collaboration and partnership? The best place to begin from is investment in the private sector, which includes the mobile service providers. It is this investment which will enhance interaction between the private sector and the humanitarian actors, (Module 1, p. 67). Multi-national companies providing innovative technology have a lot to offer to the humanitarian sector. A good example, is the collaboration that exists between Vodafone, humanitarian agencies and the vulnerable populations. The company states that it has now invested $13 billion in deploying networks in emerging markets in the last four years. The increased mobile coverage and decreased cost of mobile devices means that the most vulnerable populations are likely to have increased access to mobile phones which makes humanitarian work more efficient, (Mobile Technology in Emergencies, 2012, p. 9)

Another obstacle that acts as a stumbling block in creating collaboration and partnership among organisations is ‘culture’. Essentially, organisations need to curb adverse cultures that impede collaboration, partnership and development. Peter Drucker, a management consultant, is attributed with his famous phrase, “culture eats strategy for breakfast”. This quote conveys the power that culture has in organisations. Culture and sub-cultures are very prevalent not only in companies offering innovative technology but across international humanitarian organisations and this has potential to affect collaboration and partnerships. Johnson, Scholes and Whittington, (2011) outline for us a cultural web as a tool to explore these factors, (para. 5) (See diagram below).

Figure 1: Cultural web, Retrieved from <https://partnershipbrokers.org>, accessed: 21/10/2019

In their book on Cooperate Strategy. The three aforementioned scholars argue that within organisations exist factors that are often tangible but provide the background to any change in the management process. They further explain that in the centre is the dominant paradigm, which is fed into through power structures, symbols, control systems, rituals, organisational structures, routines and stories. The three scholars argue that any organisation or business has these elements. Furthermore, some organisations have very strong cultural and sub-cultural webs, (Gary & Hetiarachchi, 2014, paras. 5 – 6)

The best example we can cite is the humanitarian and ICT industries. The stories of Silicon Valley or savannah in the ICT industry, the symbols of post-Rwanda, post-Asian Tsunami and post-Haiti responses causing anxiety in the humanitarian industry, are all evidence showing that both industries have strong cultural and sub-cultural webs. Nevertheless, it is the broker’s responsibility to be aware of these cultures and sub-cultures and understand them in order to create effective collaboration and partnership, (Gary & Hetiarachchi, 2014, para. 6).

In an attempt to improve partnership in humanitarian work, there is need to increase funding towards R & D. Many scholars in the world of academia agree that funding in this area is lagging. For this reason the GAHI is scaling up efforts to increase innovation in the Humanitarian system, (Technological Innovation for Humanitarian Assistance and Aid, 2019, p. 35)

Another move that can improve partnership and collaboration between humanitarian community and innovative mobile organisations is investment in technological development and private sector engagement or involvement, (Module 1, p. 67)

Other areas that are worth investing time, resources and energy are the partnerships that are already existing between UN Agencies and different companies such as the Vodafone Foundation. There are other partnerships that have existed for years now and their impact on hard hit regions is quite huge. For example the partnership between UNHCR and Microsoft, OCHA and Erikson to mention but a few, (Module 1, p. 69). With this narrative in view we can now sum up this research and highlight a few points of reflection and recommendations for the future.

## Conclusion

To conclude this research, we began by looking at the four modalities of Humanitarian Diplomacy and outlined how it operates. We then delved into the evolution of humanitarianism in the 21st century with special focus on the question whether it has any ulterior motives. Our answer to this question spelled out two perspective – yes and no – emphasising the point of view from which one is looking at the question. In the subsequent paragraphs, we discussed international Humanitarian Law mechanisms in the light of the 1949 Geneva Convention and humanitarianism in relation to innovative technology in which we outlined the benefits of technology to humanitarian action. We further, explored partnership with technology providers and further discussed how we can improve this partnership to tap the full potential of information technology in humanitarian work. In this discourse our findings are rather significant. Firstly, it is evident that humanitarianism in the 21st century, has definitely evolved in the face of global challenges. Furthermore, with the state of the art technology and the advent of new mobile companies partnership and collaboration are of paramount significance to deal with humanitarian crises. However, as international humanitarian organisations partner with institutions of technology, we need to acknowledge that technology has potential to create loop holes for the manipulation and abuse of the vulnerable. As a recommendation for the future, International humanitarian Organisations will need to strengthen the already existing standards to protect the vulnerable. Apart from that, we also need to reflect on prioritising aid before business principles in this partnership take over? We are left with a task to do more in collaboration, strengthening partnerships and increasing investment especially in R&D. Last but not the least, it is evident that no humanitarian organisation is capable of dealing with humanitarian crises alone. Partnership is as significant as adaptation and openness to the ever evolving innovative systems of technology in modern times.

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