



Innovation meets Practice: Humanitarian Innovation Exchange and Accelerator 2021

Do you have an idea how to better respond to humanitarian emergencies in order to improve the lives of the most vulnerable?

If so, submit your concept idea to the “Humanitarian Aid Innovation Exchange and Accelerator 2021” and have it evaluated by our humanitarian experts. If your idea gets selected, you will receive innovation mentorship from humanitarian experts as well as innovation and industry specialists and be given access to our humanitarian field operations.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

The humanitarian landscape has changed significantly over the last few years. Crises have become more protracted and complex. Wars are increasingly targeting urban areas and conflict parties often fail to respect international humanitarian law. Due to climate change, natural disasters happen more frequently and cause more damage. Already before the Covid-19 pandemic, humanitarian needs of the most vulnerable people reached a record high with 168 million requiring assistance. Covid-19 has exacerbated this situation threatening public health and creating a protection crisis. Lockdown and confinement measures have hit vulnerable people the hardest and caused economic shock and loss of livelihood. But despite the increase in humanitarian needs, funding remains the same. These

challenges have pushed traditional humanitarian engagement to its limit. Thus, modern technologies, new innovative approaches and partnerships are needed. This is why SDC has launched “Innovation meets Practice: Humanitarian Innovation Exchange and Accelerator 2021”.

We seek cutting-edge solutions to improve emergency response and reduce the risk in countries prone to disasters and humanitarian crises. Hence, we are looking for the most promising and innovative solutions to serve the most vulnerable and add value to our emergency humanitarian assistance.





Who we are and what we are looking for

The core mandate of Swiss Humanitarian Aid and the Swiss Humanitarian Aid Unit (SHA), which is part of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), is to save lives and alleviate suffering. It is active in protecting the interests of vulnerable population groups before, during, and after periods of conflict, crises or natural disasters. The SHA is the operational arm of Swiss Humanitarian Aid. Its specialists are deployed to implement projects of the SDC or its UN partners before, during and after crises or conflicts.

Switzerland's priority in emergency response is to provide assistance to the most vulnerable people – primarily to the nearly 80 million forcibly displaced people (refugees and internally displaced persons) and its host communities – and help them meet their basic needs. Our goal is to ensure affected people's rights, support them to live in dignity and reinforce their social cohesion and resilience. People affected by crises are at the centre of our engagement which is based on the four humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality. Disaster risk prevention, creating livelihood opportunities and prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are other fundamental concerns of Switzerland's Humanitarian Aid.

New modalities of aid such as linking humanitarian cash assistance with social protection can improve the situation and help vulnerable populations regain their independence. Hence, we are looking for innovative ideas and proposals that could increase our efficiency in:

- providing housing and settlements options, such as emergency shelter, and public infrastructure;
- providing drinking water, sanitation facilities and hygiene;
- providing medical supplies;
- providing food and/or livelihood opportunities;
- providing protection and education in emergencies;
- providing appropriate greening: as large humanitarian operations such as responding to a natural disaster are not very environmentally friendly, new innovative solutions are needed to reduce packaging, waste, CO2 emissions, etc;
- providing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and responding to environment and climate change (e.g. monitoring and early warning of crises and disasters, anticipatory action, nature-based solutions, risk transfer mechanism, etc.);
- coping with the challenges and opportunities related to digital transformation in the humanitarian sector;
- providing technical support and improvement in areas such as Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM);
- contributing to the Emergency Relief Supply Chain;
- improving access to energy and telecommunication;
- strengthening social cohesion (e.g. community-based solutions);
- strengthening local humanitarian action with participatory approach and inclusion (e.g. open data) ;
- providing cash transfer programming.



Of course, we are also happy to receive proposals in other fields related to humanitarian challenges and contexts. Read more about our humanitarian engagement and apply with the designated form.

LINKS

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/organisation/departments/humanitarian-aid.html>

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/activities/humanitarian-aid/swiss-humanitarian-aid-unit.html>

Eligibility Requirements

All applicants are subject to a competitive selection process and, if successful, will get the opportunity to draw from the vast knowledge of humanitarian experts, innovation mentors and facilitators.

For Junior Researchers	For Start-ups	For SHA Members
You must be a junior researcher (Master, PhD, Postdoc, other junior researcher) affiliated to a Swiss academic institution (university, university of applied sciences or others).	Your start-up must already be established in Switzerland at the time of application. It can be a profit or non-profit organisation.	Your idea was born during a humanitarian rapid response mission, a humanitarian secondment or a humanitarian bilateral mission. Your idea must have been discussed within your expert group and/or have the support of the Head of your expert group.
Your solution must be research-based.	Your solution must be financially viable.	You are encouraged to apply regardless of your contract type, contract situation or function.
Your innovation must at least be at the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) stage.		Your innovation can include ideas and/or adaptation of products, operational sequence or procedures (how we work), etc.
Proof-of-concept is preferred.		
<p>Your application must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> include a short and comprehensive description of your idea/innovation; highlight its added value for humanitarian contexts and/or the increase in efficiency/effectiveness of humanitarian activities; show practical evidence of how the situation of people of concern could be improved; indicate how it would support or complement humanitarian interventions and serve the Swiss Humanitarian Aid strategy; not exceed the space provided. 		

How we select

Applications submitted to Swiss Humanitarian Aid's "Innovation Exchange and Accelerator 2021" will be assessed and reviewed by experts of Swiss Humanitarian Aid and SHA as well as Innosuisse innovation mentors. Please note that we will prioritise projects that are designed alongside our core areas of operations and show initial market validation to ensure impact and maximise cost effectiveness. Ideas considering gender issues and equality, better access to beneficiaries in humanitarian contexts, capacity building, local humanitarian action, do-no-harm and people-centered and inclusion approaches, accountability to affected people etc. will be given preference.

We are looking for innovations that meet the following expectations:

- improving humanitarian interventions and protecting the interests of vulnerable population groups before, during, and after periods of conflict, crises or natural disasters;
- being feasible, including time to deliver, impact, technology, maturity and user traction;
- indicating the level of maturity of your developed idea (idea stage; basic principles observed; technology and business model described; proof of concept in an experimental setup)
- showing team strength or quality of your network (for individuals), experience and commitment.



What we offer



Exchange with humanitarian experts and networking:

The selected persons/teams will have the chance to discuss their ideas with experienced humanitarian experts. In order to accelerate the implementation of the projects, you will be able to tap into and leverage our strong network of experts as well as partners in international organisations and the private sector.



Mentoring with experienced members of Swiss Humanitarian Aid and accredited Innosuisse coaches:

You have the chance to work with technical and industry mentors who will provide guidance and accelerate your progress.



Pitching platform and jury:

Take the stage to tell your story to potential partners and officials in autumn 2021.



Access to Swiss humanitarian aid operations:

Successful persons/teams will work with our humanitarian experts to further develop and refine their solutions.



Enriching experience:

Create meaningful solutions in a high-intensity process with global humanitarian experts, top-notch facilitators, mentors and pitch trainers

How it works

- Application Deadline: 31 March 2021
- Selection of Projects: End of April 2021
- First Pitching Round for around 10 selected projects with approximately 200 – 400 humanitarian experts: 7 May 2021
- Every selected project receives CHF 1,000 cash to cover the preparation costs for the event. Travel costs will be covered according to our budget rules.
- Innovation Mentoring for the 10 selected projects to the value of CHF 4,000 between mid-May and November 2021
- Second Pitching Round for the 10 selected projects: Autumn 2021
Pitching and travel expenses will be separately discussed and covered according to our budget rules.
- Access to Humanitarian Aid Operations: the creators of the selected projects will work with our humanitarian experts in the field to develop and refine their solutions. Implementation and travelling costs will be separately discussed and covered according to our budget rules.

This programme is subject to change due to Covid-19 or other humanitarian emergencies.

Submit your application

Do you meet the requirements? Submit your application using the designated application form to skhnews@eda.admin.ch.



Contact

skhnews@eda.admin.ch