

Developing an innovation process for humanitarian NGOs, with Medair

Thesis opportunity for an SPD student

To continuously improve their practices and create more impact, all types of organizations need to innovate. The same goes for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). To be able to make more impact on their target mission, improvements in how they deliver their services need updating.



NGOs differ in how they are allowed to spend money, as different donor requirements restrict how funds can be spent. This includes percentages spent on overhead, innovation, and project-specific expenses. This limits how NGOs can innovate, as the expenditure for inter-operational projects and processes must be kept at a minimum. An additional challenge is the emergency environment in which humanitarian NGOs operate. Little room for mistakes and no time to spare create an environment that naturally suppresses innovation intuition. On the other hand, a rapidly and constantly changing context, forces humanitarian NGOs to be creative on the spot, come up with ad-hoc solution, and “make things work” without compromise.

Assignment

While innovation is necessary to be able to create more value in the future, the scope to innovate is limited. Based on this notion, the student within this graduation project is expected to develop an innovation process that is fit for NGOs, to help them to make changes to produce more value for their cause.

The thesis project is conducted in collaboration with Medair, a Swiss humanitarian organization. Medair responds to human suffering across the globe, caused by displacement, disasters, and disease. Delivering emergency medical care, food, WASH (water, sanitation, hygiene) infrastructure, and shelter to vulnerable people are Medair’s core activities.

Areas of interest for Medair are for example, to understand how they can fund innovation processes, how they can grow innovation capacities within their organization, and how they can learn about new practices that can improve their work.

During the project, the student is expected to explore current innovation practices in literature and practice (through interviews) and develop and get feedback on an innovation process that is fit for NGOs.

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If you find this thesis opportunity interesting, please contact Fredrik or Markus to hear more.