

“Our people often do not even call it innovation, but they do things in new ways because they want to improve.”

The story I want to share

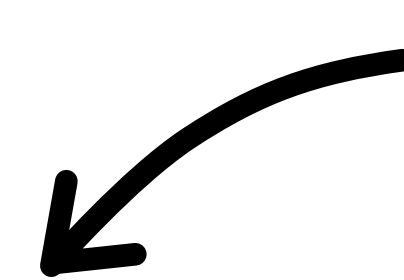
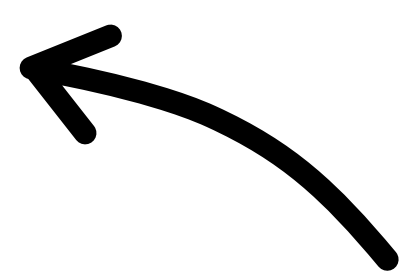
Some years ago, we initiated a knowledge-sharing award within Helvetas. We transformed it when we felt that the culture of knowledge sharing had really developed, narrowing the focus to innovation. We adjusted the criteria and now call it an innovation award.

The prize is for the staff, by the staff, judged by the staff.

It provides us with momentum once a year by drawing attention to what is happening in the different country programmes. We receive 20–25 nominations every year, which are compiled so that everybody knows what is happening in the organisation and we can learn from each

other. The award instils motivation and pride, and promotes innovation.

I believe that the most powerful thing is that we are not trying to steer innovation; it is happening in different contexts, and is the result of our sharing culture. People can microblog on our intranet wall, we have TED-style talks, ‘share weeks’ for collective strategic dialogues amongst country directors and Swiss-based staff, and ‘share days’ for global discussions around emerging topics. We try to ensure that everything we do is made visible, and try to live a working-out-loud culture.



Franz Thiel

Network Knowledge and Learning Advisor

How our sharing culture led us to be organically innovative.

Lessons learnt

- 1) Promoting innovation is a complex challenge that **requires a multifaceted approach**; no single tool or activity will get the job done. So it's definitely worth undertaking small experiments to see if they gain traction.
- 2) Patience, patience, patience. As with anything involving human interaction at scale, **do not expect things to change overnight**: you need to build up some success stories, have senior management support, identify and cultivate champions, continue to quietly (and sometimes not quietly) support on-going, innovation-friendly initiatives and be prepared to wait for the organisational change you are looking for.



TED Talks

We recently started to host TED-style talks: colleagues from different departments share their personal stories and shed light on development topics, which provides inspiration and food for thought. All TED-style talks are recorded and hosted on our intranet.



“It is a tightrope walk between standardisation and flexibility.”

The story I want to share

In 2018 Helvetas made digitalisation a priority for 2019 – 2020. Digitalisation affects not only the way we work, but also the development challenges we address.

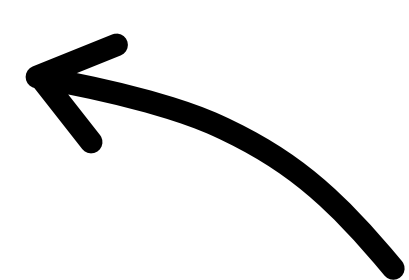
→ **We want to be more efficient and increase the availability, analysis and visualisation of data.**

In recent years Helvetas country offices have proactively started to test digital tools for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL). In particular, we want to develop digital data collection and the existing field knowledge for an organisation-wide system.

→ **Our goal is to have the digital means for data collection, aggregation, cleaning and analysis available in 80% of the countries in which Helvetas engages by the end of 2020.**

Objective: replace Excel documents with a more efficient and timely use of data to help steer results-based decision making.

→ **Our data should be useful, and not end up in data cemeteries.**



Antonia Does

Evaluation and Learning Advisor



*Efficiency, effectiveness and fun with data collection and monitoring:
our path to digital solutions.*

Lessons learnt

- Working on digitising our monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) system means engaging with our MEAL culture.
- The digital MEAL tool itself is just the 10% icing on the cake – the rest revolves around data and the engagement of staff and partners in MEAL.
- Digitalisation is about change management: the various project realities, and the multi-cultural and multi-stakeholder contexts add an additional layer of complexity.



The four workstreams of our digital transformation

1. ICT4D
2. Digital communications
3. Internal processes
4. Digital MEAL, for which Helvetas is already working with digital data collection tools in several projects, such as KoBo Toolbox and Akvo Flow.



“Digitalisation is not simply the introduction and use of digital technologies. It requires adjustments in strategy, organisation, processes, competences, working methods and culture.”

The story I want to share

It all started with strategic and political will. The league was doing well. Nevertheless, the management understood that digitalisation was not just one option among many, but a reality that was already happening. So, the digital transformation position was created – and here I am.

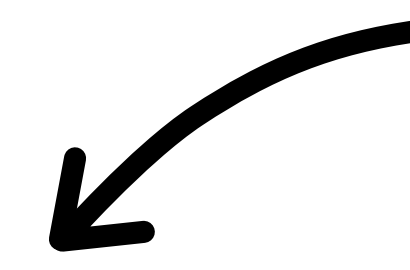
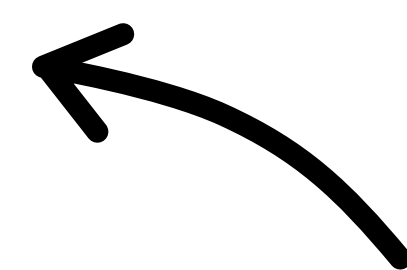
Then we involved as many employees as possible in the process. The problem is not solved by a new position – it requires cultural change that takes some time. It is about giving people the desire and time to learn, and about reducing fears.

Next, some appropriate tools and methods were introduced. For example, we started to use the digital customer journey method for our digital fundraising. We also wanted to send out some visible signals – for example, everyone can now work with a laptop, in the spirit of flexibility, agility and collaboration.

Finally, we are trying to maintain this dynamic. The leadership has a key role here; it must set an example. We are also starting to modernise our job ads to attract people who fit the new culture we are fostering.



krebsliga schweiz
ligue suisse contre le cancer
lega svizzera contro il cancro



Alejandro Ortega

Leader Digital Transformation

Culture eats strategy for breakfast!

Lessons learnt

Strategic fit – overhaul your main strategies and put in digital wherever needed

Resilience – never give up

Patience – listen carefully and try to get realistic things done



What is a customer journey?

The idea is to take a walk in the customer's (or donor's) shoes. The customer journey map is the complete sum of experiences that customers go through when interacting with your organisation.

The exercise helps you see where you can make improvements and shows you how to make every customer experience a positive one.



“Innovation is about permanently challenging the status quo. It is about allowing the space to try something new. Go for it.”



Maya Shah

Innovation Coordinator



Scalability is key.

The story I want to share

The promotion of innovative medical practices and operational strategies is one of the cornerstones of MSF's humanitarian actions, as we are **constantly looking to improve the efficiency of our operations**. To do this, we need to be able to adapt medical technologies to bring the best quality of care to our patients.

Humanitarian medicine can be perceived as providing second-rate care to poor people. However, MSF has shown that **innovative treatments and strategies allow contemporary medical care to be provided** in contexts that require unconventional approaches.



In July 2011, Initiative for Medical Innovation was started as an institutional project. The organisational culture at the time did not allow for thinking out of the box or taking risks, and was ruled by normative, compliant and consensus-oriented decision-making. **The unit was envisaged to be the catalyst for a change in attitudes.**

A review conducted in 2016, five years after the initiative started, highlighted that there had been a notable change in risk aversion. The organisation is now in the next phase, where **innovation is being mainstreamed within the departments**. The departments still need some input from our **internal support unit**.



Lessons learnt

Innovation must be done in partnership in order to work and be scalable. However, the roles and responsibilities of the partnership must be very clearly articulated right from the beginning, otherwise it will not be scalable.



What is an ideation platform?

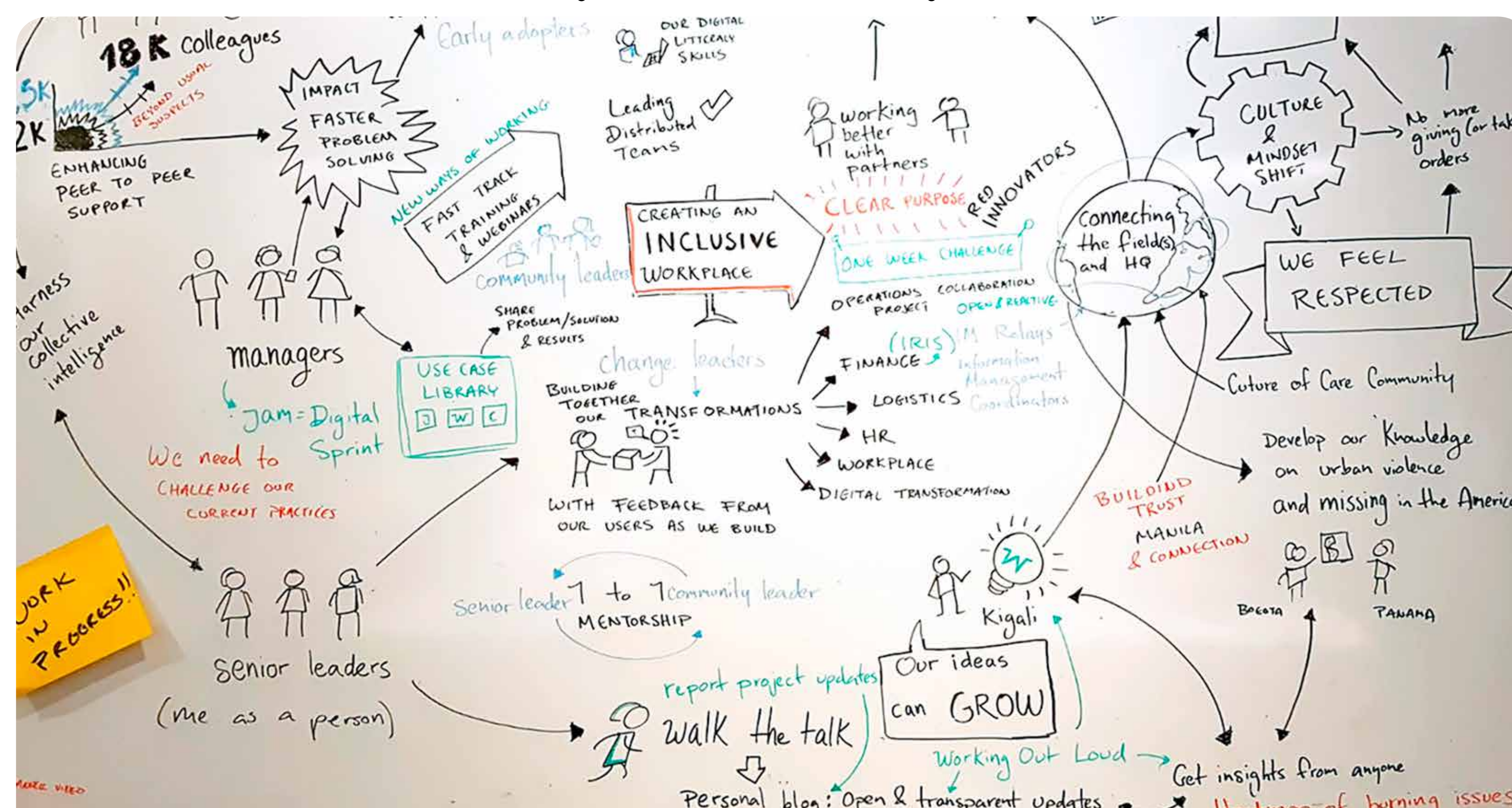
Our ideation platform, ThinkUp, is a tool that allows for collaborative working and for creating communities of practice. People come together and work on an idea / challenge, crosscutting departments, hierarchy and geographical as well as cultural diversity.

“Our system of communities helps us save time, connect colleagues worldwide and become more efficient as a network.”



Ernesto Izquierdo

Global community manager – change adviser



Building communities: week challenges, digital sprints, minimum viable products.

The story I want to share

ICRC started its innovation process with three objectives:

- work together better,
- connect HQ and the field,
- enhance peer to peer support.

We moved from a centralized support system to a networked organisation.

We built 160 online and offline communities.

- How to find answers to questions at ICRC? Ask the digital Q&A network system.
- How to co-create solutions to problems? Discuss them in a community, get feedback and iterate.

At ICRC, we engage communities.

- How to define a new institutional strategy? Develop it through a “one week challenge”, a digital forum to get community inputs!
- How do we measure the attractiveness of a new product/service? Through the “AB testing”, which allows for co-creation involving interested communities!

We are constantly developing the community mindset.

Lessons learnt

- Communities are a valuable resource. They help us to transform the organisation and our projects by getting feedback from staff and partners with an iterative approach.
- Of course, it takes some time to build them; you need to plan for at least 2 years to consolidate your community efforts.

What is a digital sprint?

- In an agile approach, a sprint is a set period of time during which specific work has to be completed by a team.
- At ICRC, it consists of inviting people for a one-hour session where they reply to questions online. Each participant speaks at the same level, people from the field brainstorm together.
- It is a fast way to collect and build on inputs; it is collective intelligence.

“We cannot predict the future, but we are able to come up with multiple scenarios of the organisation's future context and define adequate strategies.”



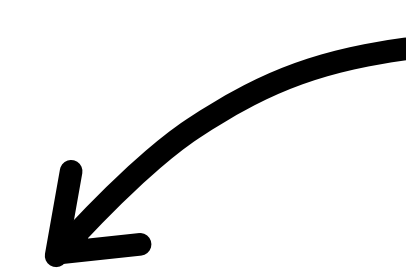
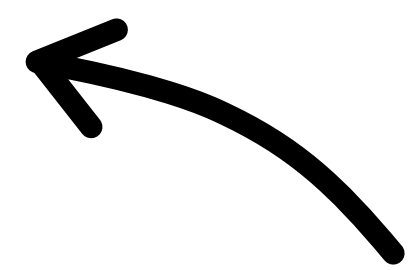
The story I want to share

Solidar Suisse's core issue is Decent Work.

Working contexts will change a lot in the next few years and Solidar Suisse is affected by these looming changes. When the last long-term strategy was being developed, it was assumed that the years ahead would be stable, not only for us but also for our partners.

However, in 2018, as the strategy took shape, **we had the impression that the future was going to bring some surprises.** Instead of the usual strategic process, we decided to use a 'scenario approach'.

Solidar Suisse could not implement the methodology by the book, but **the results** still **seem convincing.**



Barbara Burri

Co-Director

Planning in uncertainty? Take the scenario approach!

Lessons learnt

One challenge was how to **involve the field representatives** – for many of them this approach was completely new. The good news is that the outcome is positive. Executives believe the approach has helped Solidar Suisse to become more innovative and courageous.



What is a scenario approach?

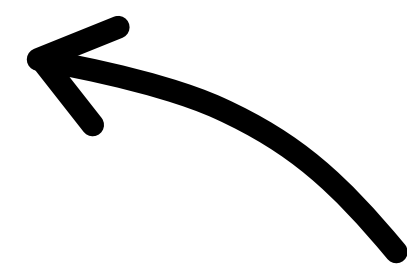
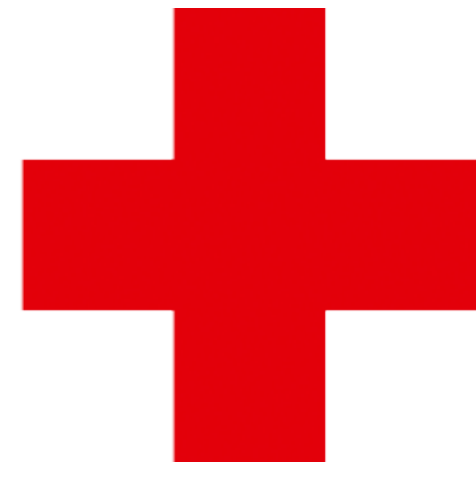
The strategy process is not based on one future, but analyses different scenarios with different futures, and the position Solidar Suisse should take in these various political, economic, social contexts. These scenarios become the basis for further strategy development.

The organisation answers questions in the strategy paper with a time-line of 4 years. The underlying scenarios, however, are designed with a perspective of 10 to 15 years.



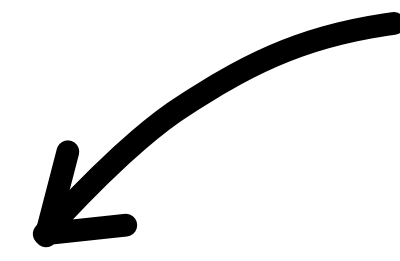
“Digital transformation opens the door to a reflection on processes and to a change of mindset.”

Swiss Red Cross



Thomas Imboden

Head of Section Web Office



It takes courage and decisions beyond the conventional.

The story I want to share

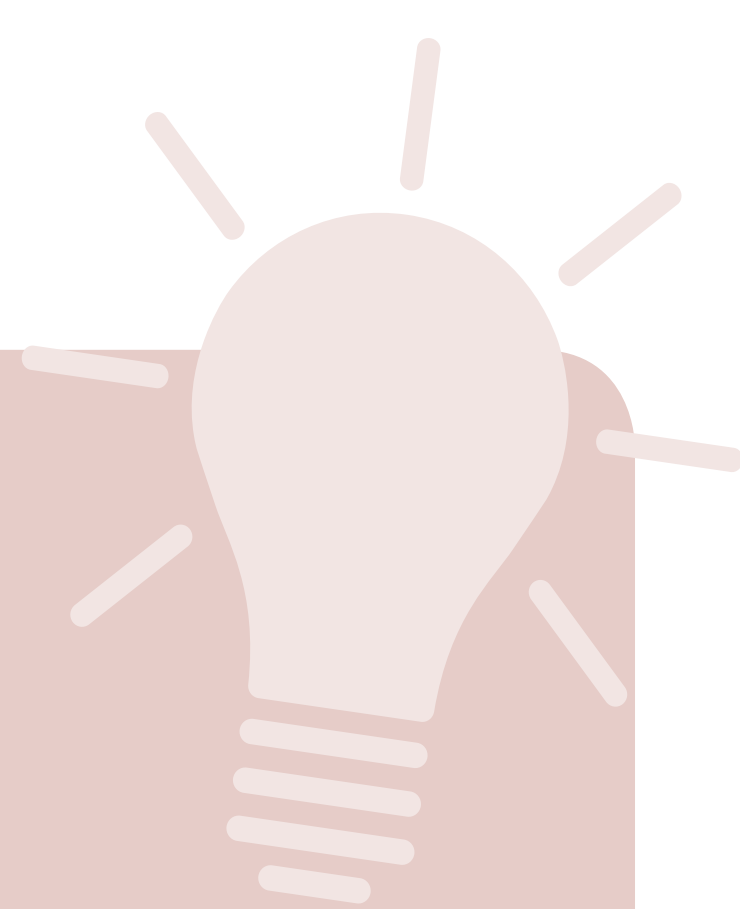


The Swiss Red Cross identified a **need to modernise** data management, increase transparency and raise digital marketing products to today's standards in order **to attract young people**. A chief digital officer was hired to tackle these challenges. We have implemented new working processes (design thinking) and tested various prototypes.

As a result, the Web Office of the Swiss Red Cross now works with an **agile approach**. Employees from other departments have been inspired and started working with the design thinking mindset.

The role of the chief digital officer has become very important, but has yet to be recognized at all levels for various reasons, such as **lack of resources** and allies.

Lessons learnt



1. **Leadership is key** – the leader has to raise awareness of the need for change and live it. If too many leaders are involved with different opinions and values, change does not happen.
2. **It takes more than just hiring a chief digital officer;** a dialogue is also required.
3. **Soft skills are needed before hardware.** Digital transformation should focus on humans first of all. The introduction of expensive software is often at the centre, but if the staff does not identify with change, the investment makes no sense.

Why design thinking?



We work in an agile environment and with design thinking so we are as close to the target group as possible. At the beginning, you have to identify the purpose. Why do you want to do something different or new? Then you enter an iterative process to create a human-centred product for your target group.

“Let's break the rules!”

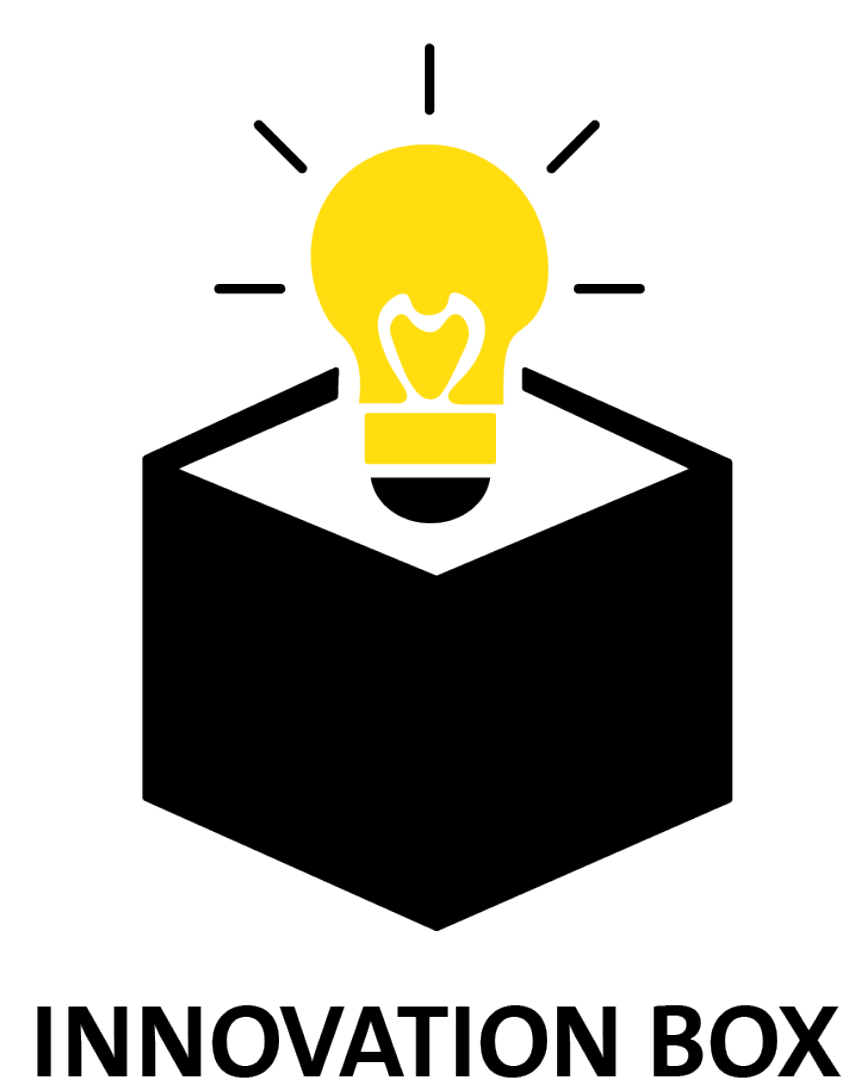
The story I want to share

I was completing my first apprenticeship year at Swisscom as a commercial clerk when I asked why my apprenticeship did not include modules in the field of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Within 5 months **this questioning led me to an create entrepreneurship training** for generations y/z: the Innovation Box is the result of my commitment to and collaboration with my employer and a business school.

Innovation Box participants work on real business problems faced by companies and create a first prototype / product / solution for them by using innovative methods such as design thinking, lean start-up or agile project management.

First established in Bern, this entrepreneurship training is now being conducted in Zurich and Geneva, with the aim of **becoming international** next year.



Morris Gyger

Commercial clerk & founder entrepreneurship program for generations y/z

Innovation Box – an educational breakthrough?

Lessons learnt

I asked, they listened. I created, they supported. We all benefitted from this dialogue.

It gave innovation and entrepreneurship a chance to emerge.



The 5 steps of design thinking

Design thinking or “hear, create, deliver” (Swisscom version) is a wonderful method to learn more about your clients and their needs. It has 5 phases:

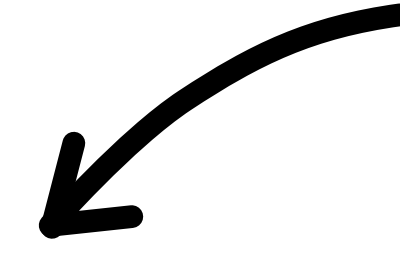
1. Empathise
2. Define (the problem)
3. Ideate
4. Prototype
5. Test



“ICT for development is disruptive. It changes the way we work. It changes what we do, as well as the scale of our impact.”



Terre des hommes
Helping children worldwide.



Thierry Agagliate
Head of innovation

How we established systematic innovation management at Terre des Hommes.

The story I want to share

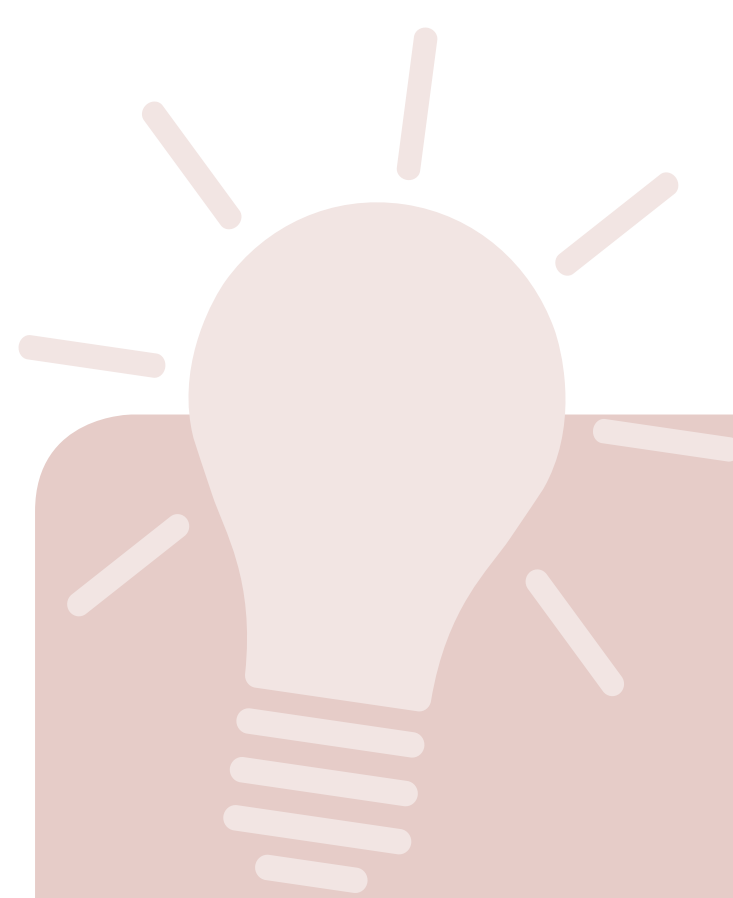


Innovation at Terre des Hommes was driven by ideas from the field.

Our innovation journey started with a health project in Africa. The Integrated e-Diagnostic Approach is the outcome of an iterative process aimed at developing innovative ways to improve health care for children in remote villages.

To introduce an innovative mindset at Terre des Hommes, we replaced formal training with awareness-raising sessions, internal thematic conferences on important technological developments, co-construction bootcamps using the design thinking approach, etc.

Today, innovation is anchored in the organisation: we are committed. However, we are still constantly trying, testing and learning.



Lessons learnt

Innovation in our sector is a challenge, both culturally and structurally. Our usual instruments, such as logframes, detailed budgets and rigid planning, theory of change, donor's compliance rules, etc. are not agile enough to foster innovation. **Therefore, we work with other actors** – academics, NGOs, donors and the private sector – to build up a coalition to help transform the sector and foster entrepreneurial and innovative dynamics.



Ideation challenge

Since 2017 we have been experimenting with ideation challenges, a tool designed to solve complex issues that arise in our programs and to identify game-changing solutions. The challenge is divided into 4 steps:

- 1. Ideation campaign:** we launch an online brainstorming campaign of two months
- 2. In-depth analysis of ideas:** each idea is subjected to reality-checking and benchmarking
- 3. Co-construction of the prototype:** a 4-day bootcamp brings together teams formed around selected ideas
- 4. Finalisation:** A small fund is allocated to produce a project document or a viable prototype for real-world testing.

“It is practically impossible to test too much and too early.”

The story I want to share

How to set up an efficient and secure cash transfer program? This was the question at the outset of New Incentives' journey a few years ago in Nigeria.

We knew that **mobile payments and communications** through SMS and phone hotlines would be more efficient and scalable. Yet it was unclear whether this would work in the context of remote Nigerian villages.

We **conducted various field tests** to verify whether our beneficiaries would understand and use mobile money tokens, SMS reminders and phone hotlines.

- **Mobile money:** randomly handed out 10-digit mobile money tokens/codes to villagers to see whether they would be able to withdraw the cash at an ATM in a nearby town
- **SMS reminders:** tested different reminder messages including different “next clinic visit” date formats with focus groups
- **Phone hotlines:** set up a hotline where beneficiaries could report issues to obtain constant feedback for further improvement



Patrick Stadler

Co-founder New Incentives and
impact consultant at Stadler Trails

From mobile money to SMS reminders: how to use simple digital tools to prototype and scale up impactful development projects.

Lessons learnt

Testing beats theoretical planning!

- **User focus and rapid testing** are concepts from the world of startups that add considerable value to development cooperation.
- First, test whether your project and tools are **well understood**. Second, test whether your project and tools are **actually used**. Iterate where necessary.
- **Tests are usually conducted too late**. Be comfortable with testing low-quality and partial solutions (MVPs – minimum viable products).

Your digital toolkit for rapid development testing

- Use **Google Sheets and Twilio** to build a prototype to send mobile money tokens.
- Use **textit.in** or a similar tool to build an automated SMS reminder platform.
- Leverage **Zapier** to connect different services (e.g. Google Sheets with Twilio)

“By harnessing the power of the digital revolution we have a massive opportunity and responsibility to bridge the gap between humanitarian and development programming for children affected by forced displacement.”



Save the Children
100 JAHRE | ANS | ANNI



Josiah Kaplan

Senior Research Advisor

Novel approaches and innovation via design thinking to help displaced children affected by crisis.

The story I want to share

We are in a rapidly escalating crisis of global forced displacement – a crisis disproportionately affecting children. Within this extreme context, Save The Children was faced with the challenge of developing a common set of tools to deal with the problems arising from this extreme context. **That's why Save the Children launched its new Migration and Displacement Innovation Platform (MDIP)** – an organisation-wide effort, bringing together a broad range of knowledge partners to collaboratively develop innovative tools, solutions, and know-how to better support children, youth and their families at the heart of displacement crises.

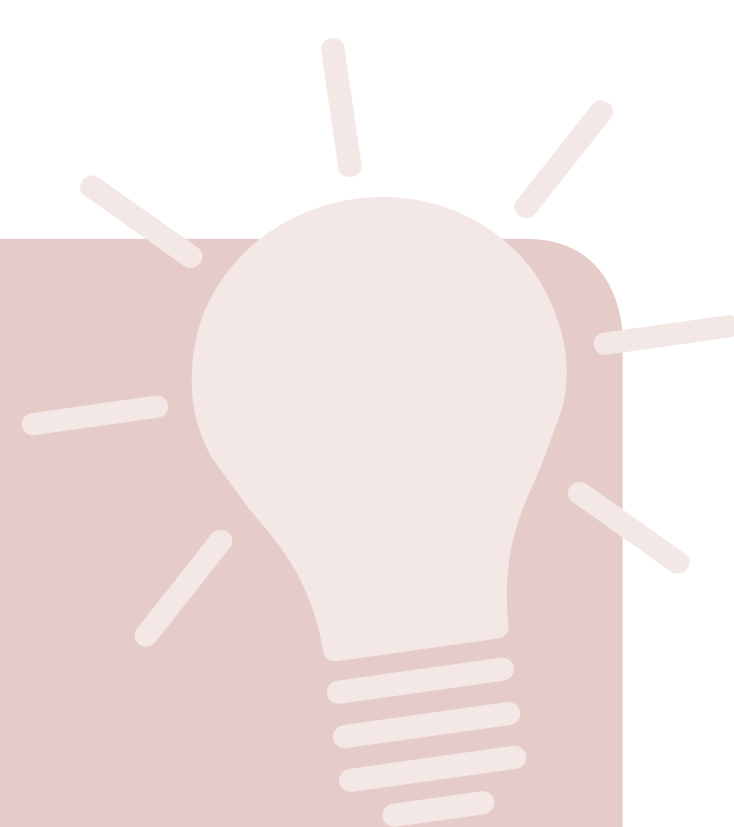
The MDIP has already catalysed a range of exciting, innovative digital projects addressing several key gaps in our current response to child-focused displacement. Key examples include a predictive analytics model to anticipate the duration and scale of forced displacement crises.

Our next steps involve the collaborative internal development of ideas in consultation with champions across Save the Children, and their stress-testing by relevant technical leads, followed by initial piloting.



Lessons learnt

- 1) To ensure organisational buy-in and meaningful commitment to human-centred principles, the whole design process must **engage multiple stakeholders as co-innovators** – from direct beneficiaries to programming staff, software engineers, and knowledge partners in the private sector and academia.
- 2) The **opportunities for risk-taking**, experimentation and 'room for failure' in humanitarian innovation need to be carefully balanced against our sector's commitment to the **principles of do-no-harm**. Yet significant gaps remain in our sector's understanding of how best to safeguard against risks arising from digital technologies.



How the Migration and Displacement Innovation Platform works

The platform uses a design-thinking approach, strongly guided by the principles of both human-centred design, and the ethical, child-safe usage of digital technologies and data. We seek to bring together multi-stakeholders, including the private sector and academia, in the collaborative design and scaling of iterative and disruptive, as well as product and process innovations.



“Top management alignment, mutual support and trust, honest communication, patience and openness, and clear time frames are crucial to managing change.”

The story I want to share

A classical hierarchical structure no longer did the job.

The reasons:

- Management overload; many issues were being handled by our direction instead of the responsible employees.
- Silo-thinking; there was a clear need to improve the collaboration between often disconnected islands of know-how.
- Processes such as decision-making were too slow for the rapidly changing environment.
- Willingness to incorporate employees ideas and offer them opportunities to develop themselves.

For these reasons we are becoming agile.

We started this process with the help of a consultant. In 6 different domains, we have defined specific roles with clear accountability, output and decision-making authority. Decisions are consulted in a circle. Translating the model to our daily work is not always easy as **we still fall back into old habits**. We do not yet have solutions for everything – we are moving slowly.


swisscontact

Anne Bickel

Director “People and Learning”



Role-based leadership, a strategic initiative.

Lessons learnt

- The most important lesson learnt is **how to manage expectations**. We communicated the overall concept too soon, highlighting the opportunities of the model without sufficiently considering realistic time frames and concrete implementation.
- Employees therefore became frustrated; they didn't understand the implications of this change for their daily work.
- We now have a circle of role coaches in place – employees in each domain – who will help to develop the concept further. **It is crucial to have both management and a driving-force of employees on board.**

How to write a “role description”?

We use a template for the description of a role. **Although tasks might be the same as in the previous job description, an employee can have roles in different domains.** This has already helped significantly to overcome duplications. Furthermore, reflecting on the accountability, output and decision-making power of each role was very helpful in clarifying previously unclear responsibilities.

“Mindset change has the most fundamental and far-reaching impact on organisational transformation.”



BROT FÜR ALLE
PAIN POUR LE PROCHAIN
PANE PER TUTTI



Christoph Ochsenbein

Finance & Administration

When I see our staff, I think of a flock of birds; no one visibly steers the flock and leadership is no longer an individual capacity, but a shared one.

The story I want to share

Our **pain point were endless and never-ending meetings at all levels.** The situation escalated at the management level, as staff wanted to consult with management on too many decisions. Meetings were overwhelmed by egos, and participants lacked the ability to act and courage to make decisions, so there were no results.

The main purpose of our transformation to an agile organisation was to **give employees back their ability to act and decide**, thereby transforming leadership from an individual to a shared model. Today we guide staff by looking at

jointly defined criteria of quality, not by giving them piecemeal tasks.

For HR that has led to a series of changes, the most important being:

- **People's portfolio is made up of roles**, not described in a function with strict terms of reference.
- The **flat organisational form** also contributes to agility.
- We thematise our agile philosophy in our **interviews**.
- We use the fact that we are an agile organisation for our **employer branding**.

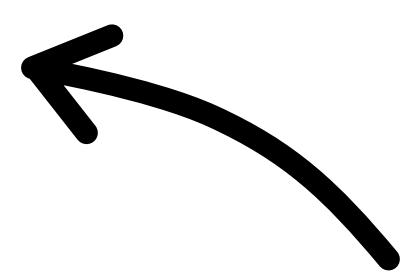
Lessons learnt

- **Finding a suitable form for the previous appraisal interview was challenging. It took some time before we found it;** members of a circle give each other feedback on how each person fulfils their roles, and then every employee can also get feedback from someone outside their circle.
- We underestimated the **onboarding needed for people who were on extended leave during the transformation** (maternity leave, sabbatical). They came back to a completely different organisation without being providing the guidance required to make them feel at home again.

The ABC of Bfacracy (Holacracy at Bread for all)

- **Living organism** instead of rigid hierarchy
- **Changing roles** replaces fixed functions
- **Fewer meetings**, but more targeted
- **Suggestions for solutions** instead of criticism
- Benefits of **collective intelligence**
- **Self-responsibility** and error culture
- **No grassroots democracy**

“Innovation without soul is prone to fail.”



Roland Thoma
Director



Start with “why?” – Find your soul to innovate.

The story I want to share

Innovation for the sake of innovation alone is doomed to fail. **Innovation needs an intrinsic driving force** – as do each one of us – to drive millions of people and organisations every day.

In the humanitarian field, the why is the somewhat demoralising fact that **humanity won't meet the humanitarian challenges with traditional means.**

Thanks to our strong roots in the Swiss public and civic society, we can utilise a **large network** to initiate and support **cross-sector cooperation and collaboration.**

We launched an innovation fund **to support the Swiss NGOs to develop innovation within their projects;** it contributes to identifying and implementing innovative solutions, to encouraging cooperation and knowledge-sharing.

The Innovation Fund currently finances 7 innovative projects. For 2020 we have doubled our financial support to **CHF 1 million per year** and our aim is to create a **Swiss coalition for humanitarian innovation.**

Lessons learnt

- Start with **‘why’**
- **Identify needs** via bottom up approach and focus on them and not politics
- Look and **pursue win-win-win-situations** in tangible pilot projects
- Let people fail and learn quickly but be even quicker in telling and **scaling up success stories**
- **Help the ‘children’ of innovation to walk** but then let them unfold their full potential and don't hold them back



Golden Circle by Simon Sinek

Simon Sinek has developed a methodology to find the soul (the purpose, the why) of an organisation and link innovation to it. Successful organisations are driven by three questions that make up the Golden circle:

1. the WHY or the core question.
2. the HOW
3. the WHAT

The **WHY** is about what an organisation believes in. Therefore, inspired and influential organisations communicate from the inside out rather than outside in.

