



RESPONSE
INNOVATION
LAB

RIL ETHICAL STANDARDS AND PRINCIPLES

The Response Innovation Lab — its core staff, members, and partners through its various initiatives will adhere to the following set of guiding principles, derived by an ecosystem of emerging practice and research.¹



ETHICAL STANDARDS

Humanitarian Purpose: Humanitarian innovation must be consistent with the humanitarian principles (humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence), and the dignity principle. It should be possible for all members of a crisis-affected community to benefit from innovation without discriminatory barriers to use.

Autonomy: All humanitarian innovation must be conducted with the aim of promoting the rights, dignity and capabilities of the recipient population. Innovation must be based on representative consultation and informed consent. Innovation should be user-driven and based on participatory methods that are sensitive to within-community power dynamics, culture, and language.

Maleficence: Innovation must be based on a 'do no harm' principle. Under no circumstances should humanitarian innovation lead to intentional harm. Risk analysis and mitigation must be used to prevent unintentional harm, including from primary and secondary effects relating to privacy and data security, impacts on local economies, and inter-communal relationships. When working with sensitive information, prohibit the intentional targeting of civilians with ICTs, protect the free flow of humanitarian information, and ensure communications access and capacity.

Experimentation: Experimentation, piloting and trials must be undertaken in conformity with internationally recognized ethical standards and country based legislation. All innovation activities must be conducted in full conformity with the Declaration of Helsinki of 1964 and the Nuremberg Code of 1947.

Justice: Equity and fairness should underpin the distribution of benefits, costs, and risks resulting from innovation. Projects should take into consideration and address the distributive consequences of innovation. Innovation should be sensitive to, and useful for, the most marginalized populations, including sensitivity to age, gender, and disability.



¹See UNICEF Principles for Innovation and Technology in Development: http://www.unicef.org/innovation/innovation_73239.html; Principles for Digital Development: <http://digitalprinciples.org/>; See Harvard Humanitarian Initiative's Signal Program for Human Security and Technology here: <http://hhi.harvard.edu/publications/what-humanitarian-communication-towards-standard-definitions-and-protections>; Oxfords Humanitarian Innovation Project workshop here: <http://www.oxhip.org/events/whs-ethics-workshop/> and report here: <http://www.oxhip.org/events/whs-ethics-workshop/>; See "Leaving No One Behind" report here: <http://www.unocha.org/node/214196>

PRINCIPLES

Design with the User: Develop context appropriate solutions informed by user needs. Include all user groups in planning, development, implementation and assessment. Develop projects in an incremental and iterative manner. Design solutions that learn from and enhance existing workflows and plan for organizational adaptation. Ensure solutions are sensitive to, and useful for, the most marginalized populations: women, children, those with disabilities, and those affected by conflict and disaster.

Understand the Existing Ecosystem: Participate in networks and communities of like-minded practitioners. Align to existing technological, legal, and regulatory policies.



Be Collaborative: Engage diverse expertise across disciplines and industries at all stages. Work across sector silos to create coordinated and more holistic approaches. Document work, results, processes and best practices and share them widely. Publish materials under a Creative Commons license by default, with strong rationale if another licensing approach is taken.

Design for Scale: Design for scale from the start, and assess and mitigate dependencies that might limit ability to scale. Employ a “systems” approach to design, considering implications of design beyond an immediate project. Be replicable and customizable in other countries and contexts. Demonstrate impact before scaling a solution. Analyze all technology choices through the lens of national and regional scale. Factor in partnerships from the beginning and start early negotiations.

Build for Sustainability: Plan for sustainability from the start, including planning for long-term financial health i.e., assessing total cost of ownership. Utilize and invest in local communities and developers by default and help catalyze their growth. Engage with local governments to ensure integration into national strategy and identify high-level government advocates.

Be Data Driven: Design projects so that impact can be measured at discrete milestones with a focus on outcomes rather than outputs. Evaluate innovative solutions and areas where there are gaps in data and evidence. Use real-time information to monitor and inform management decisions at all levels. When possible, leverage data as a by-product of user actions and transactions for assessments.

Use Open Standards, Open Data, Open Source, and Open Innovation: Adopt and expand existing open standards. Open data and functionalities and expose them in documented APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) where use by a larger community is possible. Invest in software as a public good. Develop software to be open source by default with the code made available in public repositories and supported through developer communities.

Reuse and Improve: Use, modify and extend existing tools, platforms, and frameworks when possible. Develop in modular ways favoring approaches that are interoperable over those that are monolithic by design.

