The Power of Human Connection
Impact Report
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Alwaleed Philanthropies, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Disney, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UK Department for International Development and Unilever for their ongoing support.

For their generous gifts in kind, we would like to thank Al Tamini, Can Studios, Deloitte, Discendum, Google, GSK, KPMG, Linklaters, Mother, Oliver Wyman, Olswang, Saqib Mahbub, UNICEF and Zico Law (accurate as of 31 December 2016).

Thank you to Save the Children who initiated and are incubating the Humanitarian Leadership Academy.

We would also like to thank our staff, suppliers and partners, who have supported us through these first 15 months and will continue to work with us over the coming years.

Published by the Humanitarian Leadership Academy
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First published May 2017

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“There is a vast pool of talented and committed local people who just need access to the right learning, skills and tools to enable them to move into action.”

Saba Al Mubaslat, Chief Executive
Humanitarian Leadership Academy

Foreword

As the world wrestles with the growing threat of humanitarian disasters, we stand at a critical crossroads.

Right now, in too many emergencies across the world, we lack the right people in the right place at the right time. When help comes it often arrives too late and in the form of aid workers flown in from overseas without the understanding they need of the local context.

This is a system of aid delivery that will become increasingly overstretched and unsustainable as the number of disasters continues to increase.

It doesn’t have to be this way. There is a deep wellspring of knowledge in communities affected by disaster just waiting to be unlocked.

That is why, in March 2015, we launched the Humanitarian Leadership Academy. Its ambition: to help prepare a new generation of humanitarians to cope with the crises they face in their own communities.

This isn’t a new idea. It has been discussed from as far back as the Asian Tsunami of 2004. It has organically taken shape over time through the collaboration of a whole variety of individuals, organisations and initiatives.

It is this spirit of openness and learning that will continue to power our evolution as an organisation. Knowledge is a living thing – nowhere more so than on the frontline of humanitarian disasters.

Making that knowledge available to the people who need it most is our mission. This report shows how far we’ve already come.

Saba Al Mubaslat
Chief Executive
Humanitarian Leadership Academy
We are caught in a race between the growing size of the humanitarian challenge and our ability to cope, between humanity and catastrophe. This is a race we are not winning.

Lord Paddy Ashdown in an independent review commissioned by the UK’s Secretary of State for International Development
One very windy night in Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp a fire broke out. As it spread, setting dozens of makeshift dwellings ablaze, people found themselves trapped, unable to escape the flames. Many families lost all their belongings, including their temporary homes. Four refugees, all members of the same family, were killed. They did not need to die. Simple evacuation procedures could have led them out of danger. Fire-fighting training could have helped them extinguish the blaze. Basic safety measures could have prevented it from starting in the first place.

If someone had invested in that community, helping them learn how to manage the danger they faced, lives would have been saved that night.

Every day, from the Middle East, to Indonesia, to the Democratic Republic of Congo, millions of people’s lives are torn apart by humanitarian disasters. It is time to give them the tools, skills and knowledge they need to respond quickly and effectively to crises in the countries where they live.

Creating the next generation of humanitarians

Launched in March 2015, this ground-breaking initiative aims to give 120,000 humanitarians from over 50 countries access to our learning platforms, enabling them to respond to emergencies in their own communities – saving lives, protecting and rebuilding livelihoods, getting children back into school, and helping to create more peaceful and prosperous societies.

Academy Centres

We will establish a web of connections across the globe and deliver our services through our network of Academy Centres. We opened two last year, in the Philippines and Kenya, with eight more to follow over the next five years. Each centre will make a common pool of knowledge universally available. This content will constantly evolve to incorporate the latest insight, technology and best practice. The centres will provide solid learning pathways for humanitarian workers, with internationally recognised certification or badges for successive levels of achievement, recorded in a humanitarian passport. They’ll also reach out to local people who aren’t professional humanitarians, but could play a vital role during a disaster, because of where they live or the skills they have.

This will massively expand the pool of highly capable people available in every region to prepare for an emergency and respond in the critical first 72 hours after one strikes. In turn, this will revolutionise the humanitarian sector, making aid quicker, cheaper, more efficient and effective.

Our vision is taking shape. We have made outstanding progress since we launched, reaching thousands of people and laying down the foundations for a new model of humanitarian response.

But this isn’t about us. We are just a catalyst for change. That change will happen by getting the right players round the table, by making the right connections possible, by building on – not overturning – what the sector already does so well.

“Investment in a new and better trained generation of humanitarian workers closer to where we find the greatest needs will bring development and sustainability to many of the world’s most fragile communities.”

Jan Egeland, Secretary General
Norwegian Refugee Council
March 2015 - Humanitarian Leadership Academy is launched
November 2015 - Philippines Centre launched
December 2015 - First private sector partnership launched with Unilever
February 2016 - Kenya Centre launched
May 2016 - Kaya launched at the World Humanitarian Summit
Middle 2017 - Middle East and Bangladesh Centres launch
End 2017 - Indonesia Centre launches
2018 - 2019 - West Africa, Central America and Caribbean Centres launch
To transform the way the humanitarian sector works, we need to think differently. We need to let go of our egos and recognise that the solutions to humanitarian crises don’t all rest with formal humanitarian agencies.

If a big accountancy firm has become a global leader in staff development, it makes sense to use that knowledge to train local aid workers. If a university is better than us at running online training courses, we should harness that expertise. If a multinational wants to help local businesses recover from disaster because it needs a healthy supply chain, why not nurture that win-win relationship? And if a group of refugee families has found a way to build greenhouses out of waste materials, let’s share that knowledge with poor communities across the world. These are the kinds of connections we’re now making happen.

We’re already engaging with more than 50 partner organisations across the world: from academia to the private sector, from consultancies to civil society, from governments to international institutions.

Cegos, a worldwide leader in training and development, provide subsidised professional e-learning content through the Kaya digital platform for humanitarian professionals and volunteers.

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) has provided pro-bono support to the Global Academy Office and the Philippine Academy Centre. GSK staff played a key role in developing the Philippines Academy Centre’s strategy – including facilitating a four-day strategy workshop. It helped the centre become fully operational and launch several training programmes across the country.

professionals in humanitarian assistance and protection (PHAP) and the CHS Alliance among many other partners are helping us develop a universal system of recognition for all humanitarian workers.

Government, civil society and academia are helping communities prepare for disaster in the Philippines.

Unilever is helping us provide training for small and medium-size enterprises in the Philippines to get their businesses back up and running as quickly as possible after a disaster strikes.

RedR, UNICEF, UNHCR, Sphere and the Open University are just some of the partners to contribute content to our digital learning platform Kaya.

Cegos, a worldwide leader in training and development, provide subsidised professional e-learning content through the Kaya digital platform for humanitarian professionals and volunteers.

We’re outsourcing many of our organisational functions – such as HR, finance and IT – to corporate partners and NGOs. It means we can focus on what we know best: using the expertise of our staff and partners to bring the right people together, act as a catalyst for change and then leave, giving ownership of the solution to our partners. It is through having this kind of light-touch approach that we will achieve global reach and impact.

The power of connection

“This is about being open to partnering with as many as possible to advocate for social change at scale.”

Saba Al Mubaslat, Chief Executive Humanitarian Leadership Academy

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“This is about being open to partnering with as many as possible to advocate for social change at scale.”

Saba Al Mubaslat, Chief Executive Humanitarian Leadership Academy
At the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016 we convened some of the biggest names from business, academia and the aid sector at a special event called ‘Time to Collaborate’.

High-profile speakers from Unilever, Alwaleed Philanthropies, the Harvard Humanitarian Institute and the START Network talked to a packed auditorium about the vital role local leaders can play in humanitarian response. They also explained the potential power of other sectors to provide local communities with the skills, knowledge and expertise to prepare for and respond to disaster.

The event, which was oversubscribed, inspired over 375 guests to sign a personal commitment to improve collaboration during disaster preparedness and help local communities become better able to respond to crises.

The event helped us announce our agenda to the sector. It exemplified our approach of getting as many key players around the table as possible to agree a shared global approach to disaster response.

Global vision, local reality
But any global approach should always be adapted to each local reality – and to do that we need to draw on the hard-won knowledge of local communities.

We must never forget that our most important partnerships are with local people. We need to be humble enough to recognise that the people living through disasters often know more about how to respond to them than we do. That’s why we’ve based our Academy Centres as close to these communities as possible – so we can both support and learn from them.

Even in the harshest imaginable circumstances people can find solutions to make life more bearable. During bitter conflict in Gaza in the 2009 war, one young mother found a way to grow cherry tomatoes using plastic sheets, tomato seeds and harvested rain water. In no time, the women around her had taken the idea further, using the materials to hand to set up makeshift greenhouses and grow a variety of crops.

The next step is to share that learning with communities all over the world. This is where we can play a crucial role, by taking that local knowledge to scale – so we’re not just making the global local; we’re making the local global. It’s this cross-fertilisation of knowledge that can greatly enrich the humanitarian sector.

The expertise so painstakingly acquired in Gaza can now be shared on our digital learning platform Kaya where small farmers in other disaster-hit regions can use it in their own fields. And the more such techniques are shown to work, the more likely it is that they will be promoted by governments on a far bigger scale and replicated in any number of other countries. In this way, effective grassroots solutions can have a massive impact for huge numbers of people.

We are doing this in practice already through the knowledge we are making available. As Shama Mali, deputy director at the Pakistani development organisation Community World Service Asia, said about our online learning platform Kaya: “The examples and case studies mentioned in the course are based on real-life scenarios, providing us with an ample knowledge on the application of the Core Humanitarian Standard.”

If you or your organisation has solutions to offer the sector, we want to hear from you. We want to work with you in a way that benefits you and the millions of people caught up in emergencies.

Making the local global, and the global local

Charles Lwanga-Ntale, Kenya Academy Centre Director
Humanitarian Leadership Academy
The story in numbers

6,605 people using Kaya

in 163 countries

165 courses available through world-leading education and humanitarian partners

50 organisations worldwide partnering with us

2 Academy Centres up and running in Kenya and the Philippines

All figures accurate as of 31 December 2016
Connecting people with learning

We aim to give 120,000 frontline response workers in more than 50 countries access to our learning platforms, enabling them to prepare for and respond to emergencies in their own communities.

We want to make this new generation of humanitarian workers more professional than ever before, with standardised training and accreditation. We will connect them with the learning they need using a blended approach, through the latest digital tools, face-to-face training and local mentoring. They will then take that knowledge and share it with their communities, helping as many people as possible become capable of coping with the crises they face.

Kaya, our global digital learning platform, will make a key contribution to preparing this next generation. We launched Kaya in May 2016 at the World Humanitarian Summit, where it won an award as one of the top five innovations. It is designed to make humanitarian learning resources universally available, translated into the most relevant languages, and as far as possible free of charge. Kaya includes 165 courses from world-leading education providers and humanitarian organisations. Whether they’re old hands or new to humanitarian work, Kaya’s users can learn about everything from the basics of humanitarian response, to safety and security, to nutrition and child protection, to project management and finance.

The Open University, RedR, Sphere, UNHCR and UNICEF are just some of the prestigious organisations that have contributed content. We’re now working with the CHS Alliance to take our introductory courses to the next level – translating them for Kaya and using them at workshops and other face-to-face events.

Already, since we launched Kaya, it has more than 6,600 users in 163 countries. It shows that when you make knowledge available, the demand for it is there. We expect membership to grow exponentially as we continue to add new content to the site. As Shama Mall, deputy director at Community World Service Asia, told us: “We found it very useful and informative. We aim to make it a pre-requisite, especially for the Training of Trainers courses.”

Preparing a new generation of leaders

Good leadership and decision-making are often the critical factors in an emergency response. That’s why the Humanitarian Leadership Academy and the Open University are co-hosting a free massive open online course (MOOC) on Kaya to provide leadership skills for front-line humanitarian managers around the world.

Our Chief Executive, Saba Al Mubaslat, said: “The course provides a real window into what goes on in a humanitarian emergency, in particular the challenges new managers face and the speed within which they have to make life-saving decisions.”

The path to professionalism

We know there is a critical need for higher standards of quality and consistency in humanitarian training and certification. That’s why, in collaboration with nine partners*, including the Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) and the CHS Alliance, we are developing the Humanitarian Passport Initiative. It will establish one standardised, quality-assured system of training, assessment and certification for humanitarian practitioners. It will raise standards across the board and make recruitment easier.

* Founding members: Bioforce Institut, RedR, Pearson, PHAP, CHS Alliance, Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Humanitarian Logistics Association, UCL (Nutrition department), ELRHA.

“The high-quality training and expertise delivered by this academy will mean humanitarian responses not only provide immediate, life-saving relief, but also help build a more secure and resilient world.”

Justine Greening, the former UK Secretary of State for International Development
Kaya users aren’t merely the passive recipients of knowledge. They can use the platform to share learning and discuss ideas with humanitarian workers on the other side of the world. So rather than knowledge being locked in one area and restricted to a tiny number of people, it is released to potentially benefit anyone who needs it.

Our Academy Centres accelerate this process. They work with local partners to produce and collate content for Kaya based on work happening in their own regions or bringing new innovative learning to the fore.

Such knowledge is precious. When you make it available to people they are determined to access it – as the exponential growth in Kaya users proves.

There is a thirst for learning – even, and perhaps especially, in countries going through terrible crises. It is telling that Yemen, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Syria, are home to some of the highest numbers of Kaya users.

The tools to access knowledge – the internet, laptops, smartphones, social media – are ever more available too, penetrating into even the most remote corners of the world.

So making positive, life-enhancing knowledge available to as many people as possible has never been more important.

Fortunately, in the right people’s hands, knowledge can take on a life of its own, and spread and evolve in ways we could never have anticipated or managed on our own.

Spreading the word
Making knowledge as widely accessible as possible is vital. We’ve therefore had a big social media push to promote Kaya, our centres and our journey. As of 31 December 2016 we had 10,725 followers on Twitter, 151,112 likes on our Facebook page and 800 regular subscribers to our newsletter, and the numbers are growing all the time. It’s all helping to spread the word. Join this rapidly growing community now.

An evidence-based approach
We’re committed to adapting and improving the impact of the services we offer grounded in the evidence of our monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) system. We’re building an evidence base to demonstrate how learning and knowledge improve preparedness and response.
“Before, I didn’t care as long as we are alive, even if the floods took away the store supplies. Now I realise that there are things that can be done to save the supplies. It is my responsibility to stay open, the responsibility of business owners, because people need food.”

Hellen Fabros, a small business owner, Philippines

Micro-revolutions

Knowledge is at its most potent when being put to real-world life-and-death use – especially amid the chaos of an emergency or before disaster strikes.

That’s when it can make a real, tangible difference to people’s livelihoods, security, health and access to education. In any mix of local contexts across the world, the knowledge we provide will be the catalyst for thousands of micro-revolutions that together will add up to a transformation in the way humanitarian work happens.

We’re already seeing some of these micro-revolutions, inspired by our partners and our Academy Centres in Kenya and the Philippines.

The Business Continuity Planning programme

I was afraid for my life and my family’s. One survivor said that they heard a sound like fireworks or gunfire. They only later realised that boulders were rolling down the mountains. Houses were destroyed. There was the smell of dead bodies…”

This is Hellen Fabros recalling the devastation wrought in 2004 by a series of storms that smashed into the Philippines, one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.

Understandably it was the safety of her family that was Hellen’s overriding concern. But since taking part in a pioneering training programme run in partnership with Unilever, she now knows how to protect her business too.

In the midst of a crisis it’s vital that local businesses don’t get swept away – they provide goods and services local people rely on when the worst happens. Hellen owns several businesses, including a small grocery store and a café.

When typhoon Karen hit the Philippines in October 2016, Hellen still managed to stay open thanks to her training.

“[Before] I didn’t care as long as we are alive, even if the floods took away the store supplies,” but after the training, “I realised that there are things that can be done to save the supplies. We put the bottles down [on the ground] so they wouldn’t break. We wrapped the supplies in plastic so that they did not get wet. We opened all the stores the next day.

“When I told [a local leader] that I was already there at the store, he said: ‘Thank you, we thought we would not be able to get food for the people at the evacuation centres. People were teasing me that even during storms I am out to get rich. I told them: No, it is my responsibility, the responsibility of business owners, because people need food.”

Harnessing Unilever’s expertise and insight, the Business Continuity Planning (BCP) programme will train 1,000 small- and medium-sized business owners. It will help them learn how to plan for disasters and get their businesses back up and running as quickly as possible after they strike.

So far we’ve trained 222 business leaders like Hellen and they’re starting to spread that knowledge far and wide.

“I learned a lot during the training and I am also able to share that with other business owners,” she says. The positive repercussions go wider still – BCP has already indirectly benefitted 11,000 employees of small businesses.

We’re now looking at how we can replicate BCP elsewhere in the Philippines and potentially even further afield. So, a micro-revolution in one part of the Philippines could rapidly spread to transform the way small businesses respond to disasters across the world.
Ten years ago the stillness of a January night in Kenya was shattered by the sound of a river of earth descended on the village of Kuvasali, devouring everything in its path. Ten villagers were buried alive, some of them children. Dorcas Khasiro, now a volunteer for the Red Cross, remembers the landslide like a scene from a horror movie. It had been precipitated by three days of incessant rainfall. “The downpour was so heavy that artificial rivers formed, filled and eventually burst,” says Dorcas.

But the landslide was also made more likely by months of deforestation by the villagers to clear nearby land for farming. With a greater awareness among local people about what causes landslides, perhaps the tragedy could have been avoided. Now there is a hunger for knowledge. That’s part of the reason our Academy Centre in Kenya identified Kakamega County, where Kuvasali is located, as somewhere it could make a real difference.

Kakamega County authorities are responsible for disaster management in their area, but as one of Kenya’s poorest counties they don’t have the necessary skills, expertise or funding.

Now we’ve brought together a coalition of local organisations – including the county administration, Kakamega University, the Kenya Red Cross, and the Kenya Institute of Management – to make sure communities in Kakamega can access the knowledge and resources they need before, during and after a disaster.

It’s an example of both elements of our ethos in action: the power of knowledge and the power of partnership.

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Ready to respond

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Alert and Ready Communities

One local college teacher is helping to put communities in the Philippines on a firmer footing for the next time disaster strikes. After college professor Jean witnessed the trail of death and devastation left by Typhoon Haiyan, she was determined that the next time disaster hit things would be different. Jean felt passionately that disaster risk reduction should be part of her college’s curriculum. And thankfully the forum she needed was on hand to ensure her idea could make a real difference.

We fund the Alert and Ready Communities (ARC) project, which is run by Save the Children in collaboration with the Philippine government. It has brought together a group of government, civil society and academic representatives like Jean to help at-risk communities better prepare for the next disaster. This project maximises academia’s technical expertise to train community leaders to create their own quality disaster risk reduction management plan,” explains Jean.

But it was students that Jean most wanted to reach. “This project allows us to share information with students who will be the future leaders. They will be the ones to roll this out in the future and knowing [about disaster risk reduction] at an early age will help them and the community.”

Jean thinks ARC will only get bigger. “It’s very exciting to be part of a project that seems to promise massive and rapid implementation for the whole country. My family is prepared, and I want to help the community be, too.” ARC aims to train 16,000 communities along the country’s high-risk eastern seaboard and five river basins so they have the systems in place to be ready for disasters and respond when they strike.

So far we’ve trained 68 people, who will then take what they’ve learned and use it to train people across the region. But this is just the beginning, ultimately it’s a programme we want to replicate across the world.
We need your expertise to connect local communities with the knowledge they need, share the resources and tools that can save lives, and prepare them for the crises they face. Join us today.
“This is what the future of disaster relief looks like.”

HRH Princess Lamia AlSaud
Alwaleed Philanthropies