GAMBLING WITH CRISIS?

NUDGING OUR COGNITIVE BIASES

Sweden wildfires | Airport drone incident | Cargo Cults | FEMA interview | MH17: The Station Manager’s story | Leadership | Kidnap & Ransom | Black swans & grey rhinos | The myth of the ‘lone wolf’ | Citizen & community resilience | Reputation management | Insurance & Disaster risk reduction | Supply chains
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PRINT | ONLINE | DIGITAL
March 2019 | vol:14 | issue:2

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Crisis Response Journal is published quarterly; it is available by subscription in hard copy, digital and online subs@crisis-response.com

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People are at the heart of what we do, and all our readers do, whether in business, security, response, preparedness or mitigation activities, whatever the hazard or threat. One of this edition’s themes is ‘Citizens and resilience’, but this brief strapline simply does not do justice to the all-encompassing nature and massive span of this multifaceted subject.

One area we explore is the impact on individuals who, during the course of their normal working lives, are suddenly confronted by tragedy. Whether they have trained for such events or not, how they deal with the situation and how they themselves cope with the consequences and aftermath, can provide valuable lessons for us all.

This is particularly true of Wilfred Kreuger’s article on page 38, describing how he and teams from Malaysian Airlines responded after flight MH17 was shot down. The lessons are manifold, not least concerning the personal resilience of staff who had lost colleagues and friends, yet endeavoured to help bereaved families and friends with professionalism, humanity and dignity.

Individual responsibility is further explored on page 32 where Daniel Kaniewski of FEMA describes the agency’s work in building societal resilience: “In a catastrophic event, the real first responders are going to be individuals. People are going to have to rely upon themselves, their families and their neighbours to survive in the immediate minutes, hours, even days, after such disasters.”

Sometimes it is necessary to reclarify the unwritten compact between government and citizens. And for this, individuals must be given the tools to understand their responsibilities, and how to be prepared, as noted by Korbinian Breinl on page 72: “Governments must provide clear information to the public about hazards and what actions should be taken at household, community and government level to increase resilience and reduce disaster risk.” On page 36, Christina Andersson describes how the Swedish Government has empowered its citizens with the publication of a booklet called If Crisis or War Comes.

To be truly resilient in the face of any type of emergency, all sectors of society must be involved, understand their role, and be prepared. This includes businesses of all sizes, individuals and communities, including those that are often overlooked and particularly vulnerable sectors. In other words, people are the true core of resilience.
The future of humanitarian learning

As innovative learning solutions such as games, immersive films and AI-in-Education begin to show great potential, the next challenge lies in ensuring local humanitarians and organisations can access and adapt these tools to their specific needs in difficult contexts, say Atish Gonsalves and Anne Garçon of the Humanitarian Leadership Academy.
In far too many cases around the world, we lack the right people in the right place at the right time to respond to disasters. As the frequency and complexity of humanitarian crises continue to rise, demand for highly skilled humanitarians, capable of preparing for and responding more effectively and efficiently to disasters, is going to increase.

At the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, our mission is to make knowledge available to those who need it most. There are already vast pools of talented and committed local individuals around the world, who just need access to the right learning and tools to enable them to take action. We recognise the need for a more engaging, scalable and impactful learning in the humanitarian sector, in order to build resilient societies and save more lives.

What makes the Academy unique is our combination of three core elements. First, our free digital learning platform, Kaya, offers over 400 online courses in up to 10 languages. The platform is already being used by 80,000 humanitarians worldwide, with most of them coming from crisis-affected countries such as Syria, Yemen and Iraq. Second, our network of global partners on the ground assesses local needs, creating and sharing locally relevant learning. Finally, our focus on identifying and testing innovative learning tools and technology, enables us to push the boundaries of high-quality humanitarian learning at scale and in challenging contexts.

While democratising access to learning via Kaya, our social media channels and our networks, the core goal of allowing humanitarians to create and share their own experiences is at the centre of our learning process. This allows our users to become active creators of learning, rather than just passive consumers of knowledge.

We enable this exchange by creating spaces to capture local learning through design thinking methodologies and bringing together partners from NGOs, the private sector, academia and local governments. We then use low-cost and low-tech tools to enable these ideas to be translated into tangible, innovative and local learning solutions. Finally, we scale up these solutions, using learning platforms like Kaya.

Our approach to innovation leverages not just new technology, but new tools and methodologies to solve problems in locally relevant and creative ways. We focus on two key areas: ‘Learning about Innovation’ and ‘Innovations in Learning’.

We want to help humanitarian professionals and organisations understand what innovation means, and why it is so important. We believe that anyone can be empowered to take more innovative approaches to humanitarian action with the right frameworks, tools and techniques and a focus on user-centred design (UCD) and co-creation. We have developed online courses specifically for that purpose and made them freely available.

Launched in August 2018, Innovation Essentials provides humanitarian professionals and volunteers with clear first steps on how to bring innovation to life within their own organisation and includes a series of real-life examples of innovation from around the world. Over 600 humanitarians have already enrolled in the course.

In October 2018, we teamed up with the Institute for the Future (IFTF) to explore some of the links between global trends and disasters. We discussed how to equip humanitarian professionals and organisations with the right tools and skills to navigate and adapt to these new realities. This led to the development of a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on Humanitarian Futures and Foresight. Despite its specialised content, the one-week course attracted 830 humanitarian leaders worldwide, giving them the opportunity to learn about humanitarian trends and the practical tools needed to use foresight in a humanitarian context.

“Foresight is important because it helps us plan for the future. Major disasters can be averted or even managed properly. This approach helps us see possible mistakes that could be made in the future,” said one learner from Nigeria.

**Nano-degrees and micro-credentials**

The nature of learning and education as a whole is changing very fast, with an increase in the use of personalised learning, augmented and virtual reality (AR/VR), gamification, nano-degrees and micro-credentials. The Academy is always willing to uncover new ways of creating and delivering knowledge to users in different cultures and contexts. This means scanning, testing and scaling the latest learning technology solutions from within and outside of the humanitarian sector. Our innovation work currently centres on three areas; gamification, low-cost/low-tech virtual reality/360, and artificial intelligence in education (AI-in-Ed).

In 2015, we started working with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organisation to investigate the potential of using game elements for increased engagement and effective training of humanitarian staff. Since then, we have run several workshops in Kenya, Jordan, Bangladesh and the Philippines, looking at local learning needs. These needs are then turned into learning games through the application of design-thinking methodology and gamification technologies.

Once created, the games can be integrated into existing online courses, allowing learners to test their knowledge on specific issues and to learn in new ways. The games enable learners to go through various scenarios and narrative-based journeys, and can include role-playing through virtual teams as well as group simulations. Learners can make active decisions, solve problems, and are also given time to reflect on their experiences, allowing for greater engagement and retention.

Building on previous research from academia, such as Stanford VHIL’s use of VR in empathy building, we have started to explore enhancements in crisis-immersion and empathy building using low-cost, low-tech virtual reality for volunteer and staff training.

In 2018 we started creating short VR films that integrate with existing e-learning pathways on Kaya, and portray different stakeholders’ points of view in
humanitarian contexts. This kind of immersive learning influences people’s empathy levels, making them relate more to the situation they are experiencing virtually.

Our first 360 film, You Can Not Argue with a Flood, immerses learners in the conflict-torn city of Marawi in the Philippines. Directed by award-winning documentary filmmaker Lauren Anders Brown, the film tells the story of Hanan, a young Filipina. When terrorists destroy her home, she becomes internally displaced, then goes on to suffer the consequences of a major typhoon. Hanan eventually finds recovery through volunteering and providing psychosocial support to other internally displaced people in the city. Available both in English and Tagalog on YouTube, the film has been integrated within the Volunteer Essentials e-learning pathway on Kaya to help make the learning experience even more engaging and immersive.

We are currently working on similar projects focusing on the Rohingya and South Sudan crises, experimenting with combining 3D illustrations, sound and video, to help build stronger links between learning and real-world situations, and to inform better decision-making in humanitarian workers.

We have also started to explore how artificial intelligence can help to provide personalised and predictive content that is most relevant to individual learners in their specific contexts; ideally before a disaster even happens.

With over half a million followers on our Facebook page we felt the need to find a better way to respond to people in a relevant, timely manner. The use of simple chatbots seemed like an interesting option to engage future and existing learners, both before and during the learning process. Our first chatbot went live in October 2018, enabling learners to engage with Kaya through a series of online conversations where they can learn more about the courses that are most relevant for them.

We have built short, narrative driven journeys to help learners understand the role of volunteers in the field and to help them select relevant Kaya courses. Feedback has been positive to date, with learners showing interest in interacting with our bite-sized content, course trailers.

At the Academy, we generate and develop learning around best practices for humanitarian innovation, while continually evaluating the processes, practices and behaviours used, to identify what has and hasn’t been successful. With our partner Quicksand, a design and research company based in India, we use human-centred design approaches to evaluation that combine in-depth focus group discussions to draw out qualitative data, with ongoing quantitative data captured through Kaya, the chatbot and surveys. This allows us to evaluate user engagement consistently and iteratively, improve our learning products and build an evidence base on the relative efficacy of these new learning solutions.

In conclusion, the need for more engaging, scalable and impactful humanitarian learning has never been greater. As innovative learning solutions such as games, immersive films and AI-in-Ed begin to show great potential, one of the next challenges is ensuring local humanitarians and organisations can access and adapt these tools to their specific needs in difficult contexts.

We believe that the creation of better learning opportunities leads to better crisis preparation and management for humanitarians. Investment in knowledge sharing is an investment in the skills of humanitarians, which will ultimately help save more lives. Help us make this a reality.

More details
- Visit our website: www.humanitarianleadershipacademy.org
- Register for our free digital learning platform Kaya: www.kayaconnect.org
- Start our online course on Innovation Essentials: http://bit.ly/HumInnov
- Start our online course on Humanitarian Futures & Foresight: http://bit.ly/HumFutures
- Talk to our Chatbot on Facebook: https://chatfuel.com/bothumanitarianleadershipacademy
- Stanford VHIL’s use of Virtual Reality in empathy building: https://vhill.stanford.edu

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