The Humanitarian Leadership Academy and Quicksand's engagement has seen collaboration on the creation of different innovative tools and resources for learning in the humanitarian sector. Each project seeks to build a case for a new approach to learning, facilitated by elements of gamification, storytelling, and technology.

In light of this work, a series of workshops were envisioned to concentrate efforts in gaining perspective on present and future scenarios of the humanitarian sector, global crises, and consequent needs in learning and capacity strengthening to address these.

**Project Overview**

**A Collaboration**

The **Humanitarian Leadership Academy** is a global learning initiative set up to facilitate partnerships and collaborative opportunities to enable people to prepare for and respond to crises in their own countries.

Quicksand is an interdisciplinary consultancy that facilitates the creation of meaningful experiences through design research and innovation.
Exploring Innovative Learning

Gamification
Gamification was explored as an approach to create experiences that catered to more nuanced learning objectives, which may not be adequately catered to by traditional learning models. The workshop focussed on formats like role-playing, group-based activities, and self-directed learning.

Immersive Films
Allowing users to more vividly imagine contexts and narratives, immersive films were experimented with to capture certain aspects of humanitarian work.

Chatbot-Based Interactions
Leveraging chatbot technology and its ability to tailor engagement to the user’s unique context, an iterative model was built to experiment with and test its use in a variety of capacities.
Workshop Series Framework

An internal, day-long game co-creation workshop, was organised in Goa to address identified game themes and flesh out concepts through a design sprint that comprised a set of collaborative activities.

The Goa leg of these events was a precursor to a two day workshop in New Delhi, which brought together various stakeholders with experience in the humanitarian, development and learning sectors to identify the gaps, challenges, and opportunities in current and future scenarios for the humanitarian sector.

“We need to expand the lens of humanitarianism – how are we enabling power to the most vulnerable/marginalised?”

“We need to make feedback loops part of humanitarian project mandates.”

A collection of post-its documenting ideas and insights from the panel discussions.
Part 1: Goa Workshop

The Academy met with Quicksand’s team in Goa to kick off and plan for the week ahead.

The first half of the day was dedicated to sharing research conducted on the themes and content of each gamified experience.

The second half of the day was organised as a mini design sprint, culminating in a clear framework for each game.

"Will technology be able to completely replace the 'human touch' that seems to be integral to the humanitarian sector?"
Goa Workshop Outputs

Through the workshop’s activities, detailed concepts emerged for the following games:

1. **HeforShe**
   Game created to support the global HeforShe movement, building awareness.

2. **Paying for Predictions**
   Game created to learn about flood preparedness and how to use resources available appropriately.

3. **The Induction Game**
   Game created to help new inductees integrate well into their new organisation.
Exploring Humanitarian Crisis and Learning

Part 2: Delhi Workshop

The two-day workshop in Delhi was organised to gain a deeper understanding of the humanitarian sector through conversations with various stakeholder groups. The workshop aimed to identify the challenges, gaps, opportunities and trends that would play a role in the future of the sector.

Workshop participants included:

- Academics
- Community Mobilisers
- Development Practitioners
- Educators
- Entrepreneurs
- Game designers
- Human Rights Defenders
- Humanitarian Professionals

"The format for such interventions should be co-created as opposed to top-down."

"Preemptive awareness of different approaches to a situation will help make better informed decisions."

Atish from the Humanitarian Leadership Academy presenting innovation in humanitarian learning to the workshop participants.
Delhi Workshop Agenda

Day 1
A series of panel discussions on the future of global crises, context-building of the humanitarian sector, and identification of gaps and challenges.

Day 2
A day-long design sprint to create lo-fi prototypes* of learning resources for the humanitarian sector, contextualised by the first day’s discussions.

“You and I are different, but in a crisis we are all the same.”

“There needs to be a greater push for community-led interventions.”

*low fidelity prototype, which is a quick and easy representation of the finished target product.
Given the increasing frequency of crises, creating communities of resilience and augmenting the involvement of local people in relief efforts was seen to be crucial.

Psycho-social needs must be seen as a priority while designing humanitarian interventions.

There is a need for humanitarian volunteers and professionals to be capable of quickly adapting to various contexts and providing appropriate assistance effectively.

**Panel Discussions:**

**Talking Points**

**How can we build resilience to global crises?**

“We need to be realistic about who our audience is and how we can reach them.”

“We should focus on building systems that are resilient in themselves.”

Intense discussions taking place during the workshop.
What and who is a ‘humanitarian’?

While some felt that it is nothing more than a professional title, similar to ‘teacher’, or ‘businessman’, others believed it goes beyond one’s professional capacity and speaks to one’s aspirations and desire to serve those around you. The term ‘humanitarian’ in itself, was seen by some to be exclusionary in nature, and disregard the more informal, community-based efforts of this nature.

The discussion concluded with an agreed need to create a more holistic understanding of what and who a ‘humanitarian’ really is.
There is a need for individual-specific contextualisation as opposed to standardisation. Content needs to be locally appropriate, yet accessible to various audiences. Furthermore, the creation of learning content should involve as many kinds of stakeholders as possible in order to be relatable and effective.

There were divided opinions on whether technological innovations could bridge this learning gap. Many thought that though technology has a wide reach and has a certain appeal, there may not be enough people digitally literate to harness that knowledge. Others felt that due to the adaptive nature of technology like AR, VR and AI, it would be the ideal medium to make learning content exciting as well as accommodating of people across contexts, languages and regions.

How can learning and knowledge resources for the humanitarian sector be more accessible and engaging? Can technology help achieve this?
How can we better prepare humanitarian professionals and volunteers, and their ability to adapt to crises contexts?

There is this need to inculcate the skill of being a good listener, and not arriving at assumptions about a context. There was a unanimous agreement on the lack of in-depth research and data collection within the humanitarian sector. This was voiced as a priority not only to measure impact, but for the purpose of generating knowledge of different humanitarian contexts.

Feedback and learnings need to made part of humanitarian project mandates. Besides this, there is value in creating spaces for discussion and debate within the sector across organisations and disciplines, to learn from past failures and adopt good practices.
How do you measure ‘effectiveness’ in a crisis?

This discussion began with stakeholders voicing the need for the humanitarian sector to broaden the scope of what ‘effectiveness’ of an intervention indicates. Since interventions vary from short-term to long-term, there is a need to measure them against a more dynamic, wider set of metrics, as ‘humanitarian success’ means different things in different contexts.

Further, there is a need for ‘ethical reflexivity’, self-reflection and accounting for learnings from the field that are systematically included while evaluating the effectiveness of an intervention.
The gaps that exist are of three kinds - information gaps, trust gaps and access gaps.

One of the sector’s biggest problems is that there seem to be homogeneous approaches to heterogeneous populations.

Design Sprint Exercise 1: Empathy Mapping

The aim of this session was to create personas of different stakeholders from the humanitarian sector, informed by the prior discussions.

This exercise required the participants to deep dive into creating this persona by calling out aspects like aspirations, relationships, goals, challenges, skills, preferences, and opportunities.

This was done with the aim of gaining a deeper understanding of users, on the basis of which participants would go on to create effective and desirable learning tools and resources.
“There is merit in unlearning what you have been taught to listen and empathise more proactively.”

“As humanitarian professionals we need to question ourselves and our methods, instead of making assumptions. We need to be more understanding to what the ‘real needs’ are.”

The groups engaged in lively discussions debating the needs of their target users.

**Design Sprint Exercise 2: Identifying Needs**

After having created personas, the participants were to delve deeper into their persona’s specific needs and faced challenges; and how these could be addressed.

Based on the personas, the specific needs that were identified were:

- How might we solve for inadequate skill sets in youth volunteers?
- How might we enable every citizen to be a part of the system of change?
- How might we harness and assess qualitative data from the field?
Design Sprint Exercise 3: Lo-fi Prototyping

Once challenges were identified, participants created lo-fi prototypes of how the challenges could be made into possible opportunities for learning:

1. **How might we solve for inadequate skill sets in youth volunteers?**
   Creating holistic programmes for training Humanitarian Volunteers / Professionals.

2. **How might we enable every citizen to be a part of the system of change?**
   Creating a network of video / self-made films for community action.

3. **How might we get qualitative data from the field?**
   Creating a localised and efficient system to access tools for data collection in the case of a natural disaster.
“Technology brings the 'wow factor', but is it really effective? Does it help achieve its objectives?”

“Humanitarian success and effectiveness mean different things in different contexts.”

Other Activities

VR Film Showcase
Participants were invited to watch the VR film, “You Cannot Argue with a Flood” on Oculus Go Headsets. Positive feedback and comments were received from all who watched the film.

Game Testing
On Day 2, the ‘Coaching and Mentoring’ game was tested with participants. The feedback received from this testing session helped identify technical problems and usability gaps.

Networking & Co-learning
Since this event brought together a diverse set of professionals across disciplines, time was also dedicated for participants to network and identify opportunities for collaboration.
Group Photo Day 1
Group Photo Day 2
Participant List

Abhishek Desai, Haiyya
Arjun Gopal, Supersikes Games
Ayesha Kumar, Teach for India
Charnita Kaur, Teach for India
Chitrangna Dewan, Freelance Researcher
Deepika Batta, Graam Vaani
Divita Shandilya, ActionAid
Diksha Sood, ActionAid
Harsh Agarwal, Researcher
Himanshu Giri, Pratham Books
Jessica Field, Professor
Kuljan Singh, ActionAid
Madhura Dasgupta, Haiyya
Mainak Roy, Simple Education Foundation

Nalin Agarwal, Climate Collective
Neha Rathi, Teach For India
Nivritti Tandan, Teach for India
Ragini Lall, Freelance Researcher
Shruti Jagirdar, J-PAL
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