



**Humanitarian
Leadership
Academy**

2025 Snapshot

A year of change and new foundations



2025: a year of change and new foundations

Director's note



2025 will be remembered as a year of significant change for the humanitarian sector. Then again, it's becoming increasingly difficult to remember a year that wasn't.

Amid funding pressures, technological change and increasingly complex crises, organisations across our sector have had to make difficult choices, not about what they stand for, but about how they can have the greatest impact.

For the Humanitarian Leadership Academy, 2025 was a year of change and a year of new foundations. Alongside delivering some of our most significant programmes to date, growing our global learning community, expanding support for local leaders and creating new spaces for local voices, we also refreshed our strategy and sharpened our focus on where we believe we can make the greatest contribution.

The result is a strategy that is both simpler and more ambitious. Simpler because we've sharpened our focus. More ambitious because we believe that strengthening local leadership and convening local voices are essential to building a more effective and more equitable humanitarian system. **This isn't a new direction. It's a renewed commitment to the purpose that has always driven us.**

None of this would have been possible without Save the Children, our home, and the many partners, colleagues and communities who have shaped HLA over the past decade. Thank you for believing in this mission and for being part of our journey. We hope this snapshot not only celebrates what we've achieved together, but also gives you confidence in where we're heading next.

truly,

Pawel Mania, Director
Humanitarian Leadership Academy

2025 marked a significant milestone for the Humanitarian Leadership Academy. Against a backdrop of major change across the humanitarian sector, HLA continued a long-term evolution, sharpening focus on where we add the greatest value.

During the year, we launched a new strategy for 2025–2027, completed one of our largest multi-year programmes, streamlined our operating model, and strengthened our focus on leadership, localisation, partnerships and learning.

This snapshot highlights our key achievements in 2025 through the lens of our new theory of change and strategy. A more detailed 2025–2026 Annual Report will be published in 2027.

2025 at a glance

£14m

Finalised the delivery of the £14m DEC-funded SHIFT programme, strengthening local leadership in Ukraine, Poland, Türkiye and Syria.

3

Delivered 3 Humanitarian Xchange events in Baghdad, Kampala, and Port Sudan with over 400 in-person attendees.

94,298

94,298 new users and 393,504 course enrolments on Kaya – nearly at 1 million total users.

7

7 webinars, reaching a total of 2,278 community members, and 29 podcast episodes.

24

24 local organisations across 6 countries with experienced and qualified coaches through the HLA's roster.

YHIP

Launched a Young Humanitarian Internship Programme (YHIP) for youth aged 18–30 in Türkiye.

6

6 locally led research studies, including the role of local actors, Youth Leadership and LGBTQI+ human rights.

A restructure and new strategy

2025 saw the start of a new strategy period for the HLA during a time of momentous change and shifts in the humanitarian sector: UN-coordinated appeals in 2024 were less than a third funded. The year was characterised by a significant reduction in USAID funding triggering widespread programme closure and staff reduction.

Rapid advances in digital technologies, including AI, created both opportunities and risks. In parallel, crises were increasingly complex and protracted, and slow localisation efforts faced more challenges, especially when considering resource flows and decision-making power.

HLA continued its long-term evolution to become a more focused and strategic organisation. Rather than trying to do more with less, our new 2025–2027 strategy deliberately sharpened HLA's role around where we believe we can have the greatest impact: **strengthening local leadership** and **convening local voices**.

This shift also reflects our growing focus on strengthening organisational capability and partnerships needed to lead humanitarian action more effectively. As well as supporting Save the Children, our host, on that journey.

In the new strategy, these priorities are underpinned by three cross-cutting enablers: **Research and Evidence; Advocacy, Storytelling and Thought Leadership**; and **Kaya digital learning platform**.

What ties it together is the concept of **collective action** - the idea that when people learn, connect and lead together over time, they form a community capable of shifting how the humanitarian system works. This strategy builds on HLA's extensive experience while also adapting to the changed context, bringing a deliberate decision to do fewer things better.

HLA's Strategy



Key results for 2025

Despite being a year of change and transition, 2025 saw the HLA establish new and exciting foundations (e.g. the HLA roster), embark on new paths to shift power to local actors (e.g. through locally led research), and successfully conclude one of the HLA's largest multi-year programmes.

Supporting Local Leadership

HLA's approach to supporting local leadership spans individual capability, organisational development, and the systemic conditions that enable locally led response. In 2025, this included **direct coaching and mentoring, leadership programmes for young humanitarians**, and the culmination of the HLA's three-year Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)'s **SHIFT programme** across Ukraine and Türkiye/Syria.

Coaching, mentoring and organisational development

In 2025, the HLA matched 24 local organisations across 6 countries with experienced and qualified coaches under the ECHO-funded Local SPACE project for individual and team coaching.

All of this was made possible through **HLA's newly established roster**. The roster was officially set up in 2025, to ensure that HLA can rely on qualified professionals to deliver paid consultancy services under three main categories: **Coaching & Mentoring, Humanitarian Leadership** and **Digital Learning** across different languages and countries around the world. HLA has also established the **Leadership Coaching Network (LCN)** which includes coaches providing voluntary support. LCN was made by merging former coaching pools across the HLA and Save the Children, streamlining and simplifying the approach for users.

24 local organisations

6 countries

Investing in young humanitarian leaders

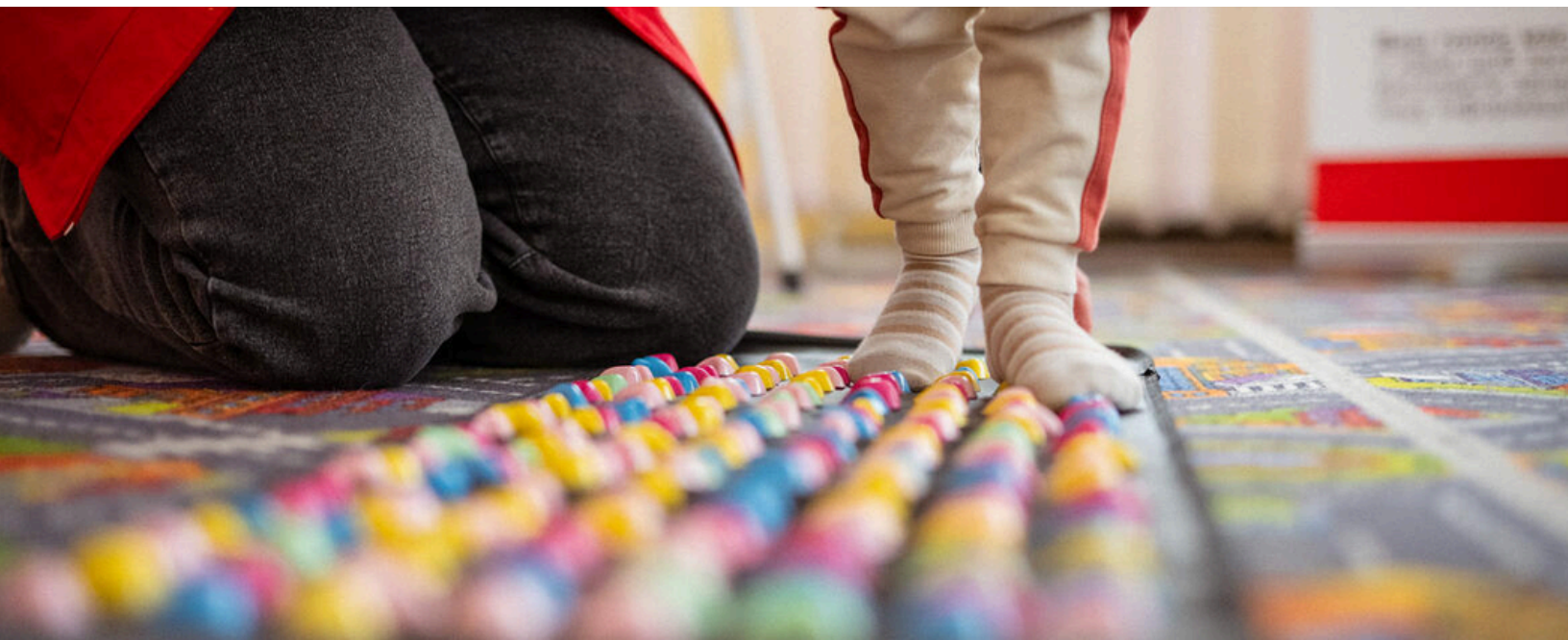
Building on a successful pilot in Peru in 2024, the HLA officially launched the **Young Humanitarians Internship Programme (YHIP)** at the start of 2025, training 9 interns placed with 3 local organisations in Türkiye.

The programme provided a full-time, four-month paid internship combined with mentorship, coaching and field learning, aimed at equipping young people aged 18-30 with the confidence and practical experience to drive change in their own contexts.

The YHIP aims to ensure a youth-led global humanitarian ecosystem by championing youth leadership and supporting a humanitarian workforce that is dynamic, representative, and ready for the challenges of tomorrow. This builds on HLA's belief that **investing in youth leadership should be much more than training; it should include mentorship, coaching, and hands-on learning**. Between the pilot in Peru (2024) and the first official programme in Türkiye (2025), the HLA has partnered with local NGOs to support a total of 18 young people aged 18–30 from **Türkiye, Syria** and **Peru**.

The programme has been an enriching and inspiring experience. Each training course, field work, and mentoring session has helped me understand how much care and effort is required for a humanitarian project to be truly effective without causing harm to the communities."

- Alexandra Egas, YHIP intern, Türkiye 2025



Concluding the HLA's SHIFT programme

2025 saw the conclusion of the HLA's work under the Disasters Emergency Committee's (DEC) SHIFT programme - three years of intensive effort to transform humanitarian sector practice and promote local leadership in Ukraine, Türkiye and Syria.

Key results over the three-year programme include:



In addition, we trialled process consultancy - piloting a capacity surge approach and enabled process consultants to work with 7 local organisations in Syria to strengthen organisational leadership capabilities.

Convening Local Voices

Creating genuinely inclusive spaces for local humanitarian actors to connect, learn and influence is central to the HLA's convening priority. In 2025, the HLA especially focused on delivering its flagship **Humanitarian Xchange events** (in person and online) and enabling locally led research.

Humanitarian Xchange events

HX was launched to provide locally led spaces where humanitarians are heard and can share, collaborate and learn; ultimately strengthening local actors' ability to respond effectively to humanitarian crises.

In 2025, the HLA organised three HX events, in Baghdad (April), Kampala (June) and Port Sudan (September), attracting over 400 in-person attendees and 811 registrants across the three events.

All three events in 2025 centred on the importance of locally-led humanitarian action. Local actors flagged the value of having space for dialogue among people who otherwise would not have met, and of amplifying voices that rarely get the opportunity to drive the agenda from the front.

Participants consistently rated HX events highly (all above 7.5 out of 10). They highlighted the diversity of participants and the quality of peer-to-peer connection as distinctive strengths.

Since its launch in 2024, the HLA has delivered a total of 6 HX conferences with over 1,000 humanitarians attending in person.

7.5/10

Participants rated
HX events highly



We want capacity recognition — we want the international actors to just believe that there is a capacity among our local actors. They just want the recognition, they want to be invited to the table to share the ideas, to reflect with their communities more. So, I guess this is the one successful example.”

— Participant, HX Kampala 2025

Continuing to grow the HLA's Kaya learning platform

Kaya, the HLA's open-access online learning platform, continued to grow in 2025. By the end of 2025, 393,504 course enrolments were recorded and the platform hosted over 900 resources in 12 languages, including English, Arabic, French, Ukrainian and Spanish. In 2025, we successfully completed the **migration of the Kaya platform to a more modern and scalable infrastructure**, ensuring it is better positioned to meet the evolving

needs of the humanitarian sector. The enhanced platform provides a more reliable and user-friendly learning experience, supporting greater access to critical knowledge and training. We also launched new iOS and Android applications, enabling offline learning and improving access for users in low-bandwidth and connectivity-constrained environments, helping humanitarian workers continue their learning wherever they are operating.

968,750

registered users

3.5M

course enrolments

900+

resources in 12 languages

94,298

new users in 2025

Kaya is one of the best things to ever happen to the humanitarian sector."

— Dr Unni Krishnan, Global Humanitarian Director, Plan International



QR-coded certificates on Kaya



To further support learner recognition and mobility across the humanitarian sector, in 2025, we introduced QR-coded certificates within **Kaya** - our global learning platform. This allows learners to easily share verifiable proof of their training with current or prospective employers and other organisations, improving confidence in the legitimacy of completed learning and helping individuals showcase their professional development.

In 2025, we continued to support **Kaya partner organisations** to develop and deliver learning within their own dedicated Kaya tenancy; enabling humanitarian organisations to strengthen the knowledge and skills of their staff and volunteers through tailored learning programmes. Many of these learning resources also contribute to the global Kaya catalogue, extending their impact across the wider humanitarian community.

33

live Kaya partners

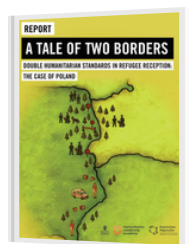
with the number continuing to grow as more organisations adopt Kaya to support their learning needs.

HLA have always shown up as more than a service provider. Through the years they've been a collaborative partner genuinely invested in helping us solve problems together."

— Longstanding Kaya Partner

Locally led research

In 2025, 6 locally led research studies were published, which the HLA supported both technically and financially (through DEC funding). The covered topics included the role of local actors in humanitarian response, youth leadership, and LGBTQI+ human rights.



This work sits within a deliberate HLA strategy to shift the research agenda: at a time when humanitarian knowledge production remains largely led by well-resourced Western institutions, the HLA's research programme aims to resource, recognise and elevate research that is prioritised and led by those closest to crisis.



Building the HLA's global community

HLA's global community of Kaya learners, humanitarians from local and national organisations, INGOs, students, academics, private sector, humanitarian responders, development specialists, and more continued to grow in 2025. Beyond exceeding 1.2 million, global community members from over 190 countries also engaged as guests and co-creators of HLA's podcast *Fresh Humanitarian Perspectives* and humanitarian webinar series focused on careers, upskilling, women in leadership, innovation, and technology.

In 2025, 7 webinars covering topics including localisation, leadership, technology and innovation were produced alongside the HLA community.

Fresh Humanitarian Perspectives podcast – an important space for sharing and storytelling – gained more popularity having released 29 podcast episodes, many with members of the HLA community.

"Thank you, Humanitarian Leadership Academy for giving me the platform to share my story. I'm grateful for the opportunity and for the visibility it brings to the voices of Sudanese refugees."

— Member of HLA Community

Looking Ahead

The HLA entered 2026 with a clearer sense of purpose and a more focused operating model. New foundations built in 2025, including a humanitarian roster, expanded coaching capacity, and an established HX convening model, position the HLA to deliver with greater focus in the years ahead.

The HLA's mission remains unchanged: to accelerate a movement for locally led humanitarian action. What continues to evolve is how the HLA delivers on that mission, adapting its offer to meet the changing needs of a sector influx.



Acknowledgments

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Any questions? Get in touch: partnerships@humanitarian.academy

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Humanitarian Leadership Academy

**Accelerating the movement for
locally led humanitarian action**