



Innovation Tools IRL

Repurposing Familiar Tools: BetterStories using the Solution Canvas to maximize their solution

BetterStories was selected as an Accelerating Innovation for Resilience (AI4Resilience) Challenge Winner, a pilot program implemented by Global Knowledge Initiative in partnership with Spring Activator with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. For more information on the program, visit the program website [here](#).

Through the AI4Resilience Challenge, BetterStories set out to build an Innovation Convening Lab – a platform bringing together stakeholders from various sectors to contribute to the local humanitarian ecosystem. The catalyst behind the development of their concept was an innovative method – the Solution Canvas.

The Solution Canvas, a variation of the well-known Business Model Canvas (BMC), proved instrumental in transforming BetterStories' initially grand but impractical concept into a tangible, actionable solution. It facilitated a shift in focus from broad, ambitious aims to the genuine needs of the local actors. Rabika Hassan, a Program Associate at BetterStories, reflects, "With each iteration of the Canvas, we had identified more and more challenges, more areas that needed addressing, and by the end of it, our concept had matured immensely from what we had initially started with."

As the AI4Resilience Challenge unfolded, BetterStories discovered the Solution Canvas's power to stimulate profound thought and



Photo courtesy of University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

continuous refinement of their initial concept. They found it offered a familiar yet distinctive experience to the BMC, providing a unique lens to view their solution. The tool allowed the team to dissect and reassemble their original idea with new depth, identifying previously unseen challenges and potential areas for intervention.

Had we not had such a visual element pushing us to take our idea to the next level consistently, we probably would not have made it this far.



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A deeper dive into the tool: Solution Canvas

The Solution Canvas was used as one of the final deliverables to determine Winners in the AI4Resilience Challenge. Recalling themes from previous phases, teams were challenged to think about their ideas more deeply. Following the traditional Business Model Canvas, the Solution Canvas is intended for innovators to think about the complexity of the idea and think through multiple aspects (including the problem, its root cause, value proposition to users & stakeholders, key metrics, etc.) all while fitting the content into a single page.

For a template of the Solution Canvas, click [here](#).

The Solution Canvas, visual and intuitive in its design, became a tangible embodiment of BetterStories' evolving concept. Printed and displayed on the office wall, the canvas served as a daily prompt for team members to contribute fresh insights, prompting constant ideation and development of their Innovation Convening Lab. "We especially enjoyed working with this tool because of how visual it is," says Hassan. "Had we not had such a visual element pushing us to take our idea to the next level consistently, we probably would not have made it this far."

The unexpected depth of exploration

prompted by the Solution Canvas was a revelation to the BetterStories team. What initially appeared to be a summary tool evolved into a springboard for deeper thought and strategic planning. "It pushed us to think deeper into the concept than we initially had," Hassan adds, emphasizing the tool's ability to elicit profound insight and focused ideation.

BetterStories, through the Solution Canvas, can now magnify the impact of its Innovation Convening Lab. By identifying the needs of local actors within the ecosystem, they aim to enhance these actors' capacity to access donor funding more efficiently, thus benefiting the ecosystem as a whole. The platform envisions a well-connected and efficient system where local actors feel empowered, and donors get more value for their money. This unique approach to problem-solving, fueled by the Solution Canvas, places BetterStories in a strong position to realize its grand idea and make a significant, sustainable impact on Bangladesh's humanitarian ecosystem.

Learn more about BetterStories solution and journey [here](#).



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A Lens on Innovation: The 'Day in the Life' Reshapes Inspira's Solution for Rohingya Communities

Inspira was selected as an Accelerating Innovation for Resilience (AI4Resilience) Challenge Winner, a pilot program implemented by Global Knowledge Initiative in partnership with Spring Activator with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. For more information on the program, visit the program website [here](#).

Innovation practices, at their core, revolve around understanding, empathizing, and engaging with the communities we aim to serve. A crucial aspect of this process is ensuring our solutions are not only applicable but also sustainable, resonating with the on-ground realities of these communities. One organization pushing the boundaries of community-led innovation is Inspira, with their remarkable tool, the "Day in the Life" photo series.

Inspira's original vision was to create a "Community-led Humanitarian Innovation Incubator for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Solutions in the Rohingya Crisis." Their focus

was on WASH needs, seeking innovations and ideas from the Rohingya community itself, with regulatory actors and INGOs being vital collaborators.

However, the tool that transformed their approach was an insightful "Day in the Life" photo series. By involving the young Rohingya community members, this tool allowed Inspira to gather critical data, giving them an intimate glance into the day-to-day life of the youth within these camps.

This tool provided the Inspira team with crucial insights about the Rohingya youths' knowledge and proficiency in using internet



Photo courtesy of Inspira Advisory & Consulting Limited



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A deeper dive into the tool: Day in the Life & Photo Journals

Throughout the AI4Resilience Challenge, participants were encouraged to understand the root cause of the problems they were tackling and to zoom out and look at it from a different perspective. The "Day in the Life" tool is a method that emphasizes ethical and inclusive shadowing and immersion in the daily lives of the community to inform and inspire better solutions.

Photo journals similarly highlight users' daily lives. Participants take pictures of their day-to-day activities – where they live, what they do, etc. Inspira combined these tools due to limited access to Rohingya camps.

Learn more about these tools [here](#).

technology and communication. This understanding highly influenced Inspira's solution, allowing them to pivot their solution around capacity building through the Rohingya youths, realizing their potential as community leaders.

Surprisingly, the tool revealed the unexpected capacity of the Rohingya youth to leverage the internet for research, communication, and technology use. The youth took photographs of problems in their camps and proposed interesting and feasible solutions, which left the Inspira team impressed and inspired. This community-led, problem-solving approach

highlighted the untapped potential within these communities and the power of using simple, accessible tools for innovation.

These revelations influenced the course of Inspira's work, emphasizing the critical role of the youth in driving their solution forward. Their involvement ensures a deep understanding of the community's needs and challenges and assures a more impactful, sustainable solution as these young changemakers lead their communities towards a better future.

By shifting their focus from WASH needs to capacity building through Rohingya youth leaders, Inspira is now addressing non-traditional issues overlooked by typical NGOs. The youth leaders will work alongside technical experts to draft feasible solutions, which can be implemented in partnership with community organizations.

From a broader perspective, this approach from Inspira stands as a testament to the significance of local insights and community-led innovation in shaping sustainable, impactful solutions. The "Day in the Life" tool not only elevated Inspira's solution but transformed their entire approach to the Rohingya crisis, showing the immense potential of these tools in revolutionizing our innovation practice.

Learn more about Inspira's solution and journey [here](#).



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Tools & Teachers: AI4Resilience Challenge and Human-Centered Design in Action at ULAB

University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh was selected as an Accelerating Innovation for Resilience (AI4Resilience) Challenge Winner, a pilot program implemented by Global Knowledge Initiative in partnership with Spring Activator with support from USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. For more information on the program, visit the program website [here](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns posed significant challenges for urban youth, particularly in education and job market access. University closures threatened youth education, while economic impacts limited the job market. Humanitarian crises, including conflicts, natural disasters, and epidemics, have compounded the unique urban struggles. The traditional humanitarian sector, predominantly experienced in rural operations, found it difficult to address these urban intricacies.

The University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), situated at the heart of Dhaka – one of the world's most densely populated cities, witnessed firsthand the inadequacy of the traditional humanitarian response system during the pandemic. More than 5000 ULAB students and their families directly experienced the ramifications of COVID-19. This experience highlighted a crucial need to understand better local dynamics, power structures, and community diversities to address urban humanitarian crises effectively.



Photo courtesy of University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

Through the AI4Resilience Challenge, ULAB plans to strengthen urban young people's capacities to be influential humanitarian actors and support local youth-led initiatives and organizations in humanitarian response through these humanitarian actors in a leadership course. It has plans to expand to other universities and become a required course.

You can focus on the color of the exterior walls, but it's futile if the walls aren't sturdy. Using a risk matrix can help us avoid spending time and resources on inconsequential matters.



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A deeper dive into the tool: Risk Assessment Matrix

The Risk Assessment Matrix was used as part of the AI4Resilience Challenge's Testing plan for our teams. Teams identified risks for each aspect of their solution canvas (problem, solution, root cause, etc.). Teams were challenged to create individual testing or validation plans for minor parts of their solution. Assessing risks piecewise encourages innovators to slow down and break down their solutions before getting too far in their design process.

For a template of the Risk Assessment Matrix, click [here](#).

One tool that stood out was the Risk Assessment Matrix, retrofitted for the AI4Resilience Challenge. This risk management tool helped the ULAB team evaluate the likelihood and severity of potential risks at various project stages. Using the matrix, the team re-evaluated previous assumptions, encountered unanticipated challenges, and even had a few "eureka moments."

Asif Uddin Ahmed, a member of the ULAB team, shares his thoughts on the process, "It helped us visualize all potential risks, prioritize resources, and even design an action plan during the project's design phase. The mentorship from GKI allowed us to examine risk assumptions in novel, efficient ways."

To illustrate, one risk identified was the potential skills deficit awareness among university students and their willingness to participate in training. Instead of time-consuming key informant interviews, the team used an online skills assessment questionnaire and a webinar to gather and discuss the results. This shift in approach identified skill gaps and fostered a connection with the target population. The Risk Assessment Matrix translated abstract risk assessment into a user-friendly visual format, aiding in resource allocation, planning, and prioritization.

Ahmed humorously equates this process to building a house, "You can focus on the color of the exterior walls, but it's futile if the walls aren't sturdy. Using a risk matrix can help us avoid spending time and resources on inconsequential matters."

The risk assessment matrix provided clarity for ULAB. With it, ULAB can do a better job of resource allocation and planning because of its robust plans for any anticipated events. ULAB could also better prioritize issues because the matrix and mentors challenged them to think of their solution more systematically.

Learn more about ULAB's solution and journey [here](#).



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