

HELIX
Humanitarian
What Works Centre
A joint initiative by elrha

Executive Director

Candidate recruitment pack

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About us

We are Elrha. A global organisation that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation.

The International Rescue Committee is a leading global humanitarian and post-conflict development organisation working with people whose lives and livelihoods are shattered by conflict and disaster to survive, recover and gain control of their future.

ABOUT HELIX: THE HUMANITARIAN WHAT WORKS CENTRE

Humanitarian needs are rising while resources are shrinking. The sector needs to make better use of promising solutions that already exist, but too often these stall because the evidence, funding, partnerships or practical conditions needed for wider adoption are not in place.

HELIX: The Humanitarian What Works Centre is a new initiative co-led by Elrha and the International Rescue Committee's Airbel Impact Lab. It will tackle persistent humanitarian problems where promising solutions exist but have not yet reached scale. HELIX brings together evidence, innovation and frontline expertise to identify the strongest opportunities and help overcome the barriers holding them back.

HELIX works through a focused portfolio of Challenges. For each, we define the problem, search widely for promising solutions, and bring together the partners, funding and expertise needed to adapt, test and strengthen them. Scale shapes the work from the outset: the people and organisations who will ultimately fund, deliver and use solutions are involved throughout, and progress is regularly assessed to decide what should move forward, change direction or stop.

Over its first five years, success will not be measured by the number of studies completed or pilots funded, but by whether HELIX has advanced a portfolio of effective solutions towards scale. Ultimately, we want HELIX to become a trusted source of promising, well-tested solutions – and for those solutions to be funded, adopted and sustained beyond HELIX.

The Executive Director of HELIX will be formally employed by Elrha, but will report and be accountable to the HELIX Steering Committee, made up of the Elrha CEO and the Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation of IRC's Airbel Impact Lab. This is a joint recruitment, recognising that HELIX is a partnership between our two organisations.

JOIN US AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HELIX

Are you a visionary leader with a passion for tackling complex humanitarian challenges?

Can you inspire and lead the HELIX Centre team with empathy and integrity, drive transformative change, and make a significant global impact through the delivery of the HELIX strategy? Do you have the expertise to encourage leaders, peers and funders to address critical humanitarian challenges with evidence-based research and innovative solutions?

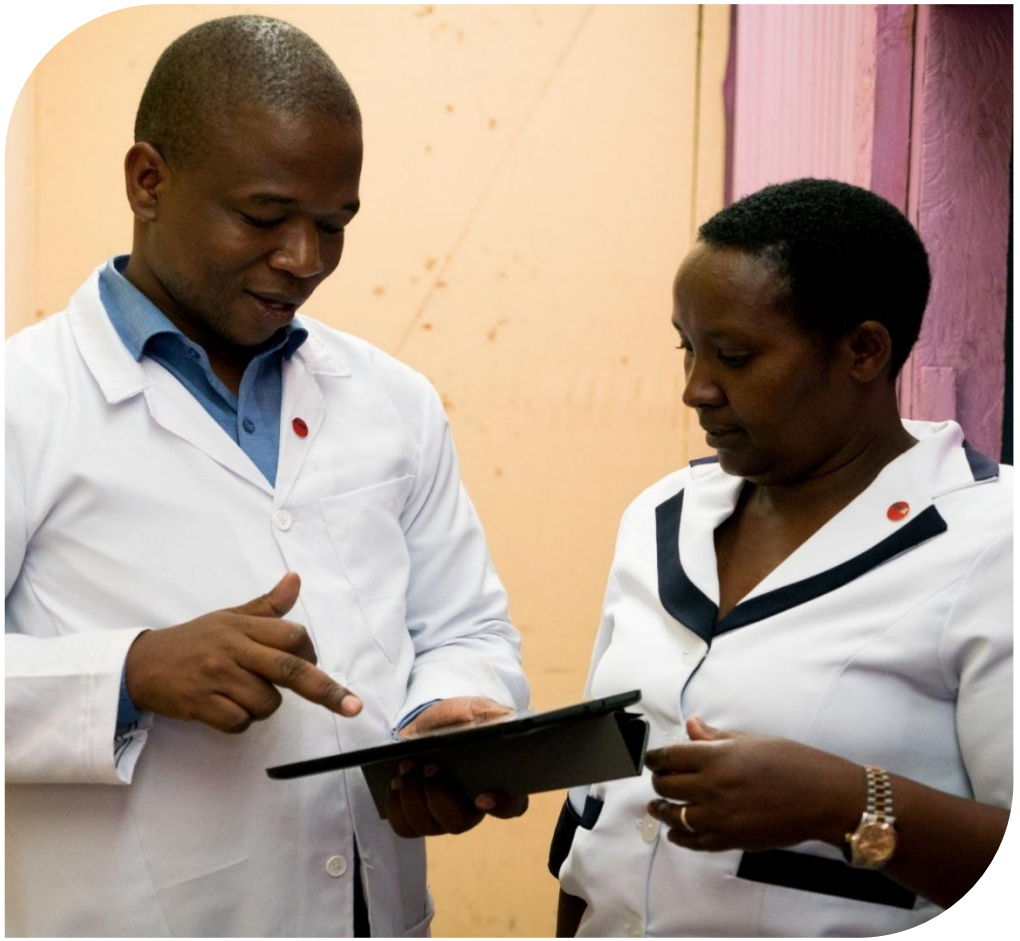
Join us at HELIX and be at forefront of addressing some of the world's most challenging humanitarian problems through evidence-based research and innovative solutions, working collectively with global partners and stakeholders to drive forward thinking and initiatives that aim to tackle the most pressing humanitarian problems. You'll be the strategist, innovator and thought leader to propel our mission forward.

As our Executive Director of HELIX, you will:

- **Lead with vision** – guide the HELIX strategic direction and represent achievements on the global stage.
- **Drive research and innovation** – respond to opportunities with agility, confidence and excellence.
- **Nurture** our high-performance, authentic, collaborative culture aligned with our core values.
- **Amplify our impact** – enhance our influence within the humanitarian system and advocate for collaboration to tackle key problems in humanitarian setting

Our core offering

- Salary range: £92,000-£102,000
- Remote working as standard – the Executive Director will be based in the UK (other locations may be considered) and have regular in-person connections in London with the Elrha and IRC teams, as well as with our strategic funding partner FCDO and travel to key humanitarian events to represent HELIX in global fora for at least 4 weeks a year on average.
- 35 hour working week with flexible working patterns to meet various lifestyle needs
- Good work/life balance
- Supportive and open culture
- 26+ days of annual leave – increasing with length of employment
- Pension scheme starting at 5%
- Family-friendly benefits – enhanced maternity, paternity and adoption leave and pay
- A tailored approach to learning and professional development



The role and responsibilities

As Executive Director of HELIX, you will provide the strategic, operational, and external leadership necessary to realise the Centre's full ambition.

As HELIX's executive leader, you will translate vision into strategy, decisions, culture and performance across a team spanning two organisations. Accountable to the Steering Committee for the delivery of HELIX strategy, workplan, and budget, you will act as the lead representative for the centre globally.

A critical measure of success in this role is the Executive Director's ability to actively leverage the complementary strengths of Elrha and IRC Airbel. Bringing together Elrha's convening authority, grant-making infrastructure, and research and innovation sector positioning with IRC's technical research and innovation capacities, operational scale, and in-country presence, to produce a centre that neither organisation could build alone.

You will ensure that HELIX operates as a transformative force in the humanitarian sector – one that identifies important problems, backs promising solutions, and creates the evidence, influence, and partnerships needed to push those solutions to scale. Jointly responsible, with Elrha and IRC Airbel, for positioning HELIX as a public good, for sustaining and growing its funding base, and for ensuring its work shifts what the sector believes is possible, not just what it does next.

Bringing strategic vision, intellectual originality and deep knowledge of the humanitarian sector, together with the stature needed to convene and challenge global humanitarian actors, you will be a credible disruptor as much as a credible insider: someone who understands the humanitarian system well enough to know where it is failing and has the courage and creativity to do something different about it. Carrying credibility within the humanitarian research and innovation community, you will possess the diplomatic judgement needed to represent the Centre externally while navigating the interests of two organisations, without becoming beholden to either.

Candidate Profile

We're looking for an accomplished leader with significant experience directing large-scale humanitarian, research, innovation, or international development initiatives. Who can bring deep sector expertise, a strong track record of managing complex partnerships and substantial budgets, and the ability to influence policy, practice, and investment at the highest levels. An exceptional communicator, strategic thinker, and relationship builder, who is committed to advancing equitable and evidence-driven approaches to humanitarian impact.

How to apply

If you want to lead an initiative that creates positive change in the humanitarian sector, then join us and we'll give you every opportunity to succeed.

- Please read through the job description for a detailed list of requirements which you can find on our website along with the link to apply: www.elrha.org/work-for-us/opportunities/
- When applying you will be taken through the Save the Children UK recruitment system. Elrha is an independent subsidiary of SCUK and benefits from some SCUK systems and processes.
- Please ensure you complete the personal statement in the application process to explain how you feel you meet the requirements of the role and why you feel this is next career move for you.
- **Applications will close on Wednesday 16 December 2026 at 23:59 GMT.** ***Elrha reserves the right to close applications up to 2 weeks early should sufficient suitable applications be received.***
- We'll be reviewing applications on a rolling basis and may request a follow up discussion for more information.
- If you have any questions about the role or application process, please contact **HR@elrha.org** in the first instance.

Interview Process

Candidates will be advised of our shortlisting decision-making process by 21st December 2026.

There will be at least two rounds of interviews for this role, all interviews will take place virtually.

- First round (virtual interviews) will be held in the week commencing 4th January 2027. Candidates will be asked to prepare a presentation to be delivered as part of the process.

- Further details will be provided to shortlisted candidates at the appropriate time.

Sponsorship and Inclusivity

Elrha holds a UK Certificate of Sponsorship and is willing and able to support visa sponsorship and relocation to the UK for the selected Candidate.

Elrha strives to be an inclusive employer and particularly encourage applications from under-represented groups such as returning parents or carers who are re-entering work after a career break, people who are LGBTQ+, from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, with a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition, with caring responsibilities, from different nations and regions, and from less advantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.