



Limitless programmes have already attracted thousands of submissions from young volunteers in Thailand, Egypt, Colombia, Nepal, Uganda, Kenya, Ecuador and the Philippines.

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Developing technology to help empower young innovators across the globe

Northumbria University researchers have joined forces with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) to deliver the third edition of the IFRC Limitless Youth Innovation Leadership Academy—a programme which has already reached thousands of young people across 150 countries with the aim of driving youth innovation.

Utilising a digital pipeline which automatically transcribes, translates and

edits video submissions, developed by [Dr Tom Bartindale](#) from [Northumbria's School of Computer Science](#), Limitless was first launched in 2021 in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Initiated to support youth innovators within the IFRC volunteer network to develop solutions to challenges facing their local communities, the programme is led by the team at the [IFRC's Solferino Academy](#) in Italy.

With the aim of putting local innovation at the core of humanitarian action, the theme of the third edition of Limitless is peace, with an official launch hosted at the Solferino Academy in Italy on Thursday 12 February 2026. By combining innovation training, mentorship, peer learning and flexible seed funding, Limitless goes beyond traditional grant-making to support participants from early idea development through testing, strengthening and scaling solutions based on local knowledge.

“We created a system that accepts video submissions from volunteers in the language that they are most comfortable with, which stylises and stitches together these videos to form one coherent story, and transcribes and translates its content to make their innovation story accessible to evaluators and other volunteers,” said Dr Bartindale, who works alongside Northumbria’s [Dr Rebecca Nicholson](#) to support delivery of the programme.

“We also included processes to give each volunteer high-quality video-based feedback about their submissions because the procedures weren’t just about facilitating a competition but encouraging innovation. As a human-computer interaction researcher, the goal was to create technology that would be well-tuned to the unique needs of the volunteers participating from various remote locations across the world.

“The theme of peace for the latest programme lends itself to exploring issues such as inclusion, food insecurity and social cohesion which will have an impact on the lives of many young volunteers. It’s about using well-designed technologies to build capacity for change.”



Dr Tom Bartindale from Northumbria University.

Previous Limitless programmes have attracted thousands of submissions on ideas addressing gender-based violence, mental health advocacy, and greening urban balconies from young volunteers in Thailand, Egypt, Colombia, Nepal, Uganda, Kenya, Ecuador and the Philippines.

Video learning modules and content that is pushed to participants via WhatsApp ensures the programme is accessible. The [responsible use of Artificial Intelligence](#) has been introduced this year to support a faster moderation process for ideas submitted, as well as a chatbot to help participants search for resources that will inspire them to develop their ideas further.

Speaking about the launch of the latest Limitless programme, Xavier

Castellanos, [IFRC](#) Under Secretary General said: “Long lasting peace will not be built without young people—and it will not be sustained if they are treated as beneficiaries rather than leaders. Limitless is a clear commitment by the IFRC to shift power, trust young people with responsibility, and back their leadership with real resources, real influence and real opportunities to shape the future of their communities and our network.”

Previous global editions of Limitless, focused on COVID-19 response and climate and environment, have trained thousands of young people and supported youth-led initiatives to thrive. Building on this foundation, [Limitless Peace](#) aims to train up to 10,000 additional young people and support up to 1,000 youth-led peacebuilding initiatives worldwide.

Limitless is delivered with support of a diverse group of partners committed to youth leadership, innovation and peace, including Dubai International Humanitarian Aid & Development (DIHAD), the European Union, the Youth Empowerment Fund, Rivet, the Italian Red Cross, Northumbria University and Monash University.

Northumbria University and the IFRC are [long-standing collaborators on research](#) linked to [volunteering in humanitarian contexts](#). Researchers from [Northumbria Centre for Global Development](#), which celebrates 15 years of creating new knowledge in 2026, recently signed a new agreement with the IFRC promoting collaborative research and learning.

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