Hacking4Humanity: devising tech solutions to development problems

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From November 24 to 26, Graduate Institute students, young professionals and entrepreneurs took part in Hacking4Humanity, a "hackathon" (hacking + marathon) where participants had to devise technological solutions to the problems faced by refugees, working in small groups to imagine, construct and present viable projects.

Institute student Samita Thapa (MDev '19) was part of the winning team, Water Inception, which explored how to make use of Atmospheric Water Generators, a technology which can produce up to 7,000 litres of potable water per day by condensing humidity from air, to provide off-grid water installations to refugee camps.

"I've always loved the idea of involving technology in the development sector", says Samita. "My group came up with a sustainable and scalable business model that involves resettled refugees in Switzerland, the general public, and the private sector in providing this solution to refugee camps. It was good to take a break from academia, working with people from different backgrounds and with different expertise, plus refugees themselves, on a real-life problem – Hacking4Humanity was a really enriching experience."

Hacking4Humanity also featured a lecture from Graduate Institute professor Melanie Kolbe on the challenges and opportunities associated with refugee integration. The event, which took place at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, was co-organised by Project Integration, a student-created initiative which teaches computer programming to refugees and asylum seekers in Geneva, and Girls in Tech Switzerland, a non-profit focused on empowering girls and women who are passionate about technology.

LEARN MORE: Visit Hacking4Humanity and watch the video with Samita below.