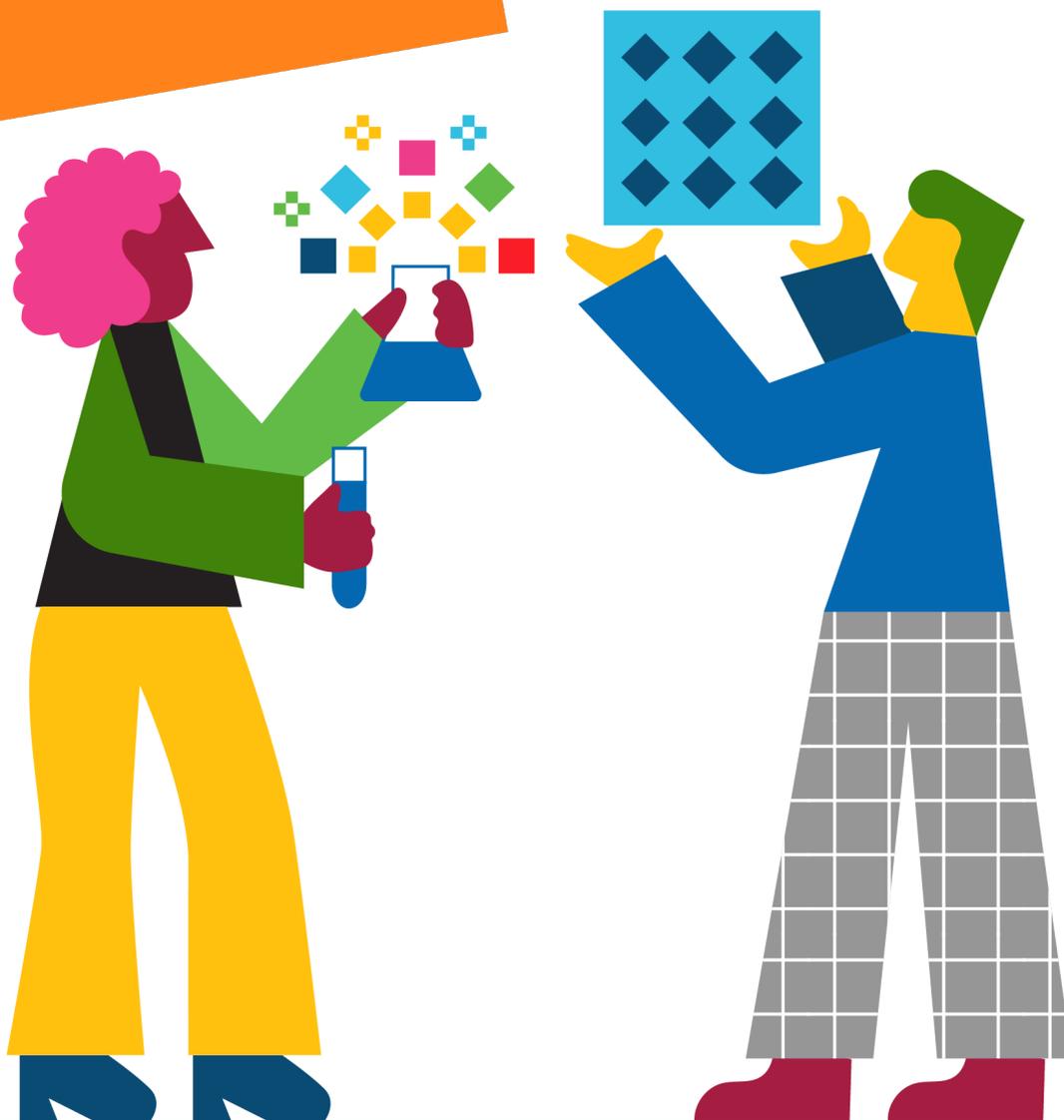


Reimagining Development through a Global Learning Network



2021 Annual Report



accelerator
labs



Co-building the Accelerator Labs as a joint venture with:



UNDP
Core
Partners

“Our flagship initiative – now active in 115 countries – has influenced UNDP’s organizational culture to become more agile in the face of uncertainty. We saw this ability to pivot during the pandemic. Thanks to the visionary support of Germany and Qatar, the UNDP Accelerator Labs Network was able to create new capabilities to reimagine and help drive development for the 21st Century.”

Achim Steiner

2022 UNDP Executive
Board Meeting



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The Accelerator Lab Network at a Glance

Investing in innovation takes a particular kind of foresight and a willingness to reach beyond what is already known to achieve greater heights. It is no different in our global quest to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in time. Thanks to our founding investors, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany (BMZ), and the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), the UNDP Accelerator Lab Network is moving the needle forward toward these Goals in a new way – by creating and sharing insights to learn what works and what doesn't in sustainable development. In 2019 we embarked on a journey from launching and testing the Network as “the fast and the curious” to demonstrating our value, while we witnessed the Network evolving.

In 2021, we can reflect on a jam-packed year of furthering the Lab Network's role in achieving the SDGs and surfacing first-of-their-kind ideas on how we can work towards systems transformation. A deeper understanding of the challenges unearthed from the Network indicates that we are tapping into the groundwater of sustainable development.

In 2021, 273 “Labbers” with unusual skillsets, enriching **#nextgenundp**, continued to explore, test, experiment and disseminate learning.



Our Accelerator Labs were continuously creating new insights into sustainability problems by searching for local solutions and forging partnerships to make breakthroughs on complex global challenges. After proving the Network's value as an agile enabler to the COVID-19 crisis response in 2020, this year allowed the Accelerator Labs to unfold their enormous potential: by increasing the use of **new data sources** such as citizen data, open data and social network data to diversify how sustainable development problems and solutions are understood. By using **innovative methods** such as behavioral insights, collective intelligence and solutions mapping the Labs and their partners better understand the issues at stake and can help governments that are grappling with multiple development challenges.

To date, UNDP Accelerator Labs have documented over 2,000 grassroots-led solutions worldwide covering all 17 SDGs, addressing issues such as waste management and food security, and exploring untapped opportunities in the circular economy, digital transformation and education.

The Accelerator Labs' ability to operate outside a vacuum enabled UNDP to partner with entrepreneurs, young innovators and artisans in local settings who are actively addressing the local needs of their communities.



By doing that, the Accelerator Labs have established **more than 1,000 different partnerships** since 2019 for their learning, and **88 percent** of the Labs are working with partners that are new to their Country Offices.

“The UNDP Accelerator Lab Network is an ambitious experiment and is already a success. It was launched as a deliberate disruption to the usual way that UNDP operates, and to increase the credibility of UNDP as a partner of choice for 21st century sustainable development challenges. It is both a unique organizational intervention at a national level as well as one working at a global scale, learning across a network of development practitioners across the world.”

- Midterm Evaluation 2021

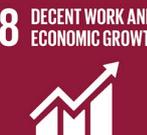
This Annual Report highlights how far we’ve come in 2021 and what progress we’ve made toward our three main objectives (as per the results framework established in the UNDP Accelerator Labs Project Document). It also highlights some leading cases, innovators, stories and initiatives from the dynamic Network’s workstreams, and some of the crucial key findings of the 2021 Accelerator Labs project, the independent Midterm Evaluation, which will lead to shaping the future iterations of the Lab Network.



The Accelerator Labs and the SDGs: Accelerating the Journey

The UNDP Accelerators Labs are producing meaningful insights that increase our knowledge and improve development interventions targeted toward the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In fact, in 2021, **the Accelerator Labs addressed 152 different development challenges, covering all 17 SDGs.** While most Labs work on SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities and SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, over this past year we have seen a diversification of the SDGs that the Accelerator Labs are helping to address. For example, 29 new learning initiatives throughout the Network are focusing on SDG 5: Gender Equality and 46 new initiatives on SDG 13: Climate Action.

SDGs per Lab

 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>		<p>21 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>With a focus on youth entrepreneurship, the UNDP Somalia Accelerator Lab is working alongside SIMAD University to experiment with new ways to overcome the barriers that prevent young entrepreneurs from registering their small businesses and accessing formal financing mechanisms.</p>
 <p>2 ZERO HUNGER</p>		<p>10 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>With the Institute of Natural Resources, the UNDP South Africa Accelerator Lab is running three different prototypes for sustainable gardens to address food insecurity and nutrition in vulnerable households.</p>
 <p>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING</p>		<p>27 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>The UNDP India Accelerator Lab, along with the University of Nottingham, developed an artificial intelligence platform to identify air pollution hotspots in key cities and are helping regulators target non-compliance.</p>
 <p>4 QUALITY EDUCATION</p>		<p>13 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>Along with the Systems Thinking Association and Boğaziçi University, the UNDP Turkey Accelerator Lab developed a climate literacy program for children which they are testing with the Darussafaka School in Istanbul with the goal of scaling it to the rest of the country with UNICEF.</p>
 <p>5 GENDER EQUALITY</p>		<p>21 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>The UNDP Ecuador Accelerator Lab is working together with partners, including UNFPA and UN Women to address gender-based violence. Family victims of femicide in Ecuador employ social cartography to memorialize victims, reveal injustices and identify alternative social justice mechanisms.</p>
 <p>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p>		<p>6 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>The UNDP El Salvador Accelerator Lab, together with the Ministry of Tourism, is collecting and disseminating water quality data from the coastline and rivers to help the government take action. For example, the Ministry is now issuing alerts for tourists when water quality hits critical levels of pollution.</p>
 <p>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p>		<p>5 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>In Mozambique, 75 percent of households still rely on biomass energy for cooking which is expensive and unhealthy. The UNDP Mozambique Accelerator Lab, along with partners from the private sector, are exploring what the barriers and incentives are to using natural gas, a cleaner and healthier alternative.</p>
 <p>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>		<p>49 Labs worked toward this SDG</p>	<p>The UNDP North Macedonia Accelerator Lab is using social media data and focus groups with youth communities to understand the complexity of the informal sector, which makes up 17 percent of North Macedonia's economy.</p>



31

Labs worked toward this SDG

To address the low returning rates of tourists to Zanzibar, the **UNDP Tanzania Accelerator Lab**, along with the Zanzibar Commission for Tourism and XsenseAI, are combining artificial intelligence and satellite data to conduct web scraping of popular tourist websites to understand these challenges and to promote prospects in the tourism industry.



34

Labs worked toward this SDG

Along with the African Continental Free Trade Area agreement (AFCTFTA) Secretariat, the **UNDP Ghana Accelerator Lab** is using ethnographic research to map the implications of the AFCTFTA agreement in hard-to-reach and marginalized communities and testing solutions that can help them take advantage of the agreement's economic and social opportunities.



39

Labs worked toward this SDG

The **UNDP Philippines Accelerator Lab**, along with the Municipality of Pasig City and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, is leading a systemic design exercise to create a circular economy model for the city of Pasig.



27

Labs worked toward this SDG

The **UNDP Syria Accelerator Lab**, alongside local partners, designed the Reverse Shop - an upcycling outdoor booth in the city of Aleppo where citizens can trade in any type of household waste for compensation.



30

Labs worked toward this SDG

The **UNDP Senegal Accelerator Lab** is working alongside the local government on an integrated flood management program in Dakar. The Lab is incubating solutions selected through the Water Innovation Challenge, co-organized with the Ministry of Environment, to focus on interventions such as using excess water flow for reservoirs.



6

Labs worked toward this SDG

The **UNDP Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Accelerator Lab** is enhancing access to digital solutions for the Blue Economy by connecting fisheries and small tourism companies to online marketplaces, sustainable tourism verification and ocean-to-plate traceability.



5

Labs worked toward this SDG

The **UNDP Uruguay Accelerator Lab** is exploring alternative finance models to enhance public participation in the restoration and conservation of native forests in the country.



18

Labs worked toward this SDG

The **UNDP Guinea Bissau Accelerator Lab** is experimenting with "mobile justice," a decentralized digital platform that improves accessibility to justice for communities who live far away from the city center.



25

Labs worked toward this SDG

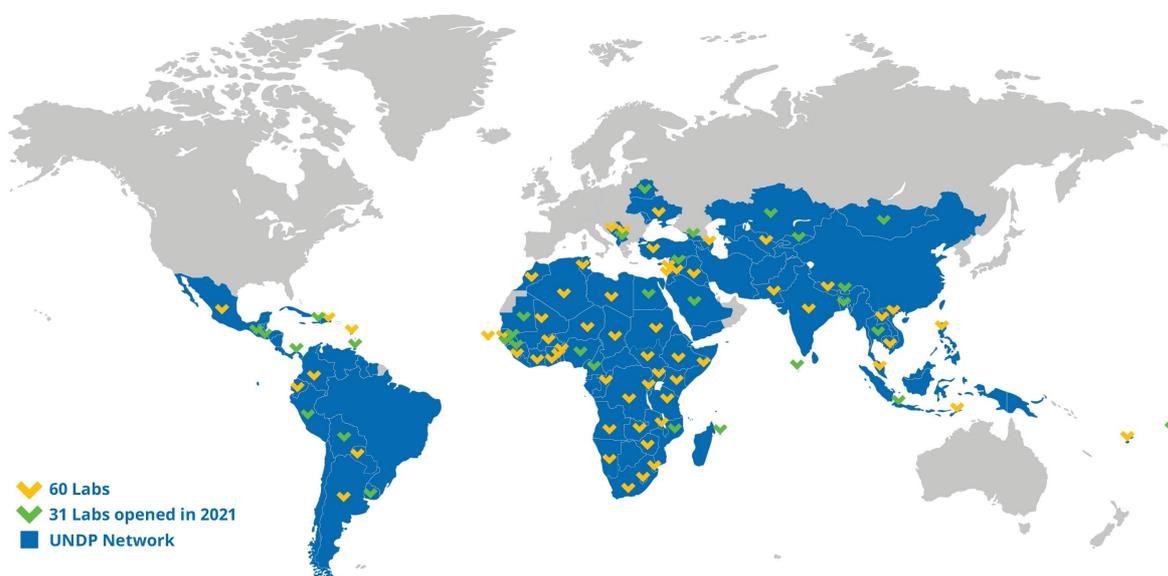
From rural youth in Tunisia, to the Shack Dwellers Federation in Namibia, to amateur scientists in Argentina, **all 91 Accelerator Labs** are bringing along new or unusual partners to contribute to the achievement of the SDGs.



Chapter 1: Expanding our horizons

In 2021, the UNDP Accelerator Labs Network expanded. With the success of the first cohort of 60 Accelerator Labs, we decided to broaden our horizons with 31 new Labs. The UNDP Accelerator Labs Network is now comprised of **91 Labs working across 115 countries.**

In addition to the 60 Labs established in 2019, UNDP Accelerator Labs are now open in the following UNDP Country Offices: Bangladesh, Belarus, Republic of Bhutan, Bolivia, Cameroon, Egypt, El Salvador, Georgia, Republic of Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Maldives, Mauritania, Mauritius (& Seychelles), Mongolia, Mozambique, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Panama, Peru, Samoa (& Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau), Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Syria, Thailand, Trinidad & Tobago (Guyana & Suriname) and Uruguay.





Acting Charge d'Affaires at Qatar's embassy in El Salvador Tariq Othman al-Othman participated in the UNDP Accelerator Lab launch event in Guatemala on March 19, 2021.



Harald Klein, German Ambassador to Guatemala, speaks at the launch of the UNDP Accelerator Lab.

A very warm welcome

UNDP Country Offices welcomed their new Accelerator Labs in 2021 and reached out to local innovators and development partners during **national launch events**. Given evolving COVID-19 restrictions, the events were diverse – from 100 percent digital to 100 percent physical, and everything in between – which required creativity and engagement with the local development and innovation ecosystem. The Accelerator Labs celebrated their induction on the national innovation scene by inviting founding investors from both Germany and Qatar, governmental partners, development actors, innovators, and national media among many other actors. They acknowledged BMZ and QFFD, and representatives of both attended various launch events.

Who are our new recruits?

Following intense and unique recruitment activities, we brought 93 new Lab members on board in their respective roles as UNDP Heads of [Exploration](#), [Experimentation](#), and [Solutions Mapping](#). In addition:

- 56% are female
- 80% are new to the UN system
- 80% bring experience from the private and non-profit sectors, academia and government
- 76% have experience in prototyping
- 62% have experience in ethnographic research
- 76% returned to their home countries to take up their new positions
- Through the Labs, most UNDP Country Offices (>85%) have acquired new capabilities such as prototyping, ethnographic research, open innovation and futures analysis.

Meet some of our new recruits



“I’m Yomna Saleh, Head of Experimentation at the UNDP Egypt Accelerator Lab.

“Before joining the Lab, I was building the first marketplace for scientific research experiments in the region, doing my second master’s degree in public policy, facilitating innovation and design thinking cycles, and figuring out a new life as a mom!

“This role with the UNDP Accelerator Labs is a sweet spot in the middle of everything I enjoy and am excited about. Between innovation, development, design and experimentation, the amount of intellectual in-flow is just the right amount to make me love my job that much.”

“I’m Aldarsaikhan Tuvshinbat, Head of Exploration at the UNDP Mongolia Accelerator Lab.

“My passions are learning new things and figuring out a way to improve challenging situations. I try to help others make the most out of the available opportunities to enrich their lives.

“As an urban planner, I also believe if we help each other, we can create better communities where everyone benefits. I realized that most of these cutting-edge ideas and innovations are tested in developed nations. I saw the Accelerator Labs as an opportunity to explore new ideas in the context of developing countries.”



“I’m Ana Djú, Head of Solutions Mapping at UNDP Guinea Bissau Accelerator Lab.

“I am very passionate about African self-determination, youth empowerment and community development. I draw inspiration from global movements for change led by the youth. Being a One Young World ambassador has exposed me to many approaches to development and has shown me that we must all do what we can to achieve a better world. No matter how small the change, it makes a huge difference in the grand scheme of development.

“I have always been firm about decolonizing the development sector. The bottom-up approach of the Lab scraps the idea that solutions must be “transplanted,” handing over the baton to those who understand the context best, which inevitably leads to sustainable solutions toward development.”

Come find us online: 91 Accelerator Labs, 91 pages

Opening up even more opportunities to partner, a one-stop shop is now available for [all 91 of our Accelerator Labs](#). You can view the Labs by country, visit the unique country pages for each Lab and learn about each Lab's focus of

work, current partners and Lab team members. These webpages are designed to amplify potential partnerships and scaling opportunities, so that the private sector, academia and others can contact country Labs directly to facilitate even more ways to connect and collaborate.



UNDP Burkina Faso Accelerator Lab

We work on community vulnerability due to climate change, conflict management, environmental pollution, waste management and urban mobility.

empowering experimentation



While remaining aligned with the UNDP Burkina Faso Country Office's priorities, the Burkina Faso Accelerator Lab, in conjunction with the three units of the Country Office (governance, resilience, and environment/energy), work to map solutions in each sector. We also test local solutions in these three areas. We collaborate on UNDP projects and programs on the Accelerator Lab's approach to project and program planning and implementation, as well as the use of tested solutions that have proven successful. The Accelerator Lab was selected for calls for projects under the Africa Borderland Center and the [Japan SDGs Innovation Challenge](#). Through the Innovation Challenge, seven UNDP Accelerator Labs are collaborating with Japanese companies to co-develop and design models to test potential solutions to address specific development challenges problems identified by the Labs.

Our team



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UNDP Iraq Accelerator Lab

We are exploring the reasons for the limited innovation environment and working on policy-level changes to embed tools for innovation within Iraqi institutions.

empowering experimentation



The UNDP Accelerator Lab in Iraq is exploring critical points within the public innovation ecosystem in Iraq to support in injecting and scaling up local solutions that enhance the innovation ecosystem in Iraq. The Lab is using systems thinking, design thinking and future thinking to sense, explore and support the development of local solutions. Specifically, the Accelerator Lab is working with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research in Iraq to induce structural changes within teaching methods and capacity building of both youth and higher education professionals with the aim of limiting tunnel vision in employment. Adding to this, the Lab is using Behavioral Insights (BI) to sense and explore the need for innovative methods and tools within the Business Incubation Centers in the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The aim is to experiment on the usefulness of such tools in creating more innovative ideas from the entrepreneurs within the Business Centers.

The Lab has also been working on innovative ways to promote action on climate change by encouraging positive behavioral change in Iraqi citizens.

Our team



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Chapter 2: Independent Midterm Evaluation

The UNDP Accelerator Labs Network as an experiment at scale

In 2021, UNDP commissioned an **independent Midterm Evaluation (MTE)** of the UNDP Accelerator Labs. The purpose of the MTE was to test assumptions about how the Accelerator Lab Network can enable and contribute to desired changes within UNDP and assess its impact on the broader development ecosystem.

The MTE verifies the success of the Accelerator Labs modelling how UNDP can reimagine development for the 21st century. It also proves that continuous exploration and experimentation lead to greater capacity for organizational learning and renewal, responsiveness and stakeholder engagement.

“The Labs have shown how this new way of working is credible, which suggests changes of this nature are possible in organizations like the UN. In this sense, the Accelerator Lab Network is already a successful experiment.” - Midterm Evaluation 2021

The MTE identified impact within UNDP in four areas, elaborated below. It demonstrates how the Labs are making good on the original promise to “take innovation from a boutique venture to a corporate reflex.” The Labs have produced UNDP-wide demand for a continuous R&D function for sustainable development, and this is the direction of future iterations of the Lab Network.

Midterm Evaluation of the UNDP Accelerator Lab Network

Project Title: Accelerator Lab Network
Project ID: 0019078
Countries: 31 Countries / 8 regions

Project Dates: 29 Jun 2016 – 31 Dec 2023
Project Budget: US\$ 195,200,000
Evaluation Type: Mid Term Evaluation

Period Under Evaluation: Jul 2019 – Oct 2020
Evaluator: Jørgen Christensen
Evaluator Email Address: jchristensen@un.org

Evaluation Dates: 01 Mar 2021 – 10 Aug 2021
Commissioned by UNDP
Published 23 September 2021

Approach

Projects are becoming more user-oriented, iterative, learning-oriented and portfolio-driven, recognizing the complex and cross-cutting nature of development challenges and building inroads for systems transformation efforts. For example, in [Uganda](#), authorities have traditionally relied on outdated data to understand the scope of deforestation – or fought it by sending soldiers to deter illegal loggers. Thanks to the UNDP Accelerator Lab, the national forest authority can now create a land cover map in one month instead of one year. In [Viet Nam](#), experiments showed what kind of recycling initiatives citizens respond to best, saving the local government money before large-scale investment. This work contributed to a larger circular economy portfolio, building on investments in sensemaking across the Regional Bureau for Asia Pacific.

Relationships

The MTE highlights the Labs' ability to build partnerships with new actors for UNDP, such as local communities and grassroots movements. The UNDP Accelerator Labs established 531 partnerships in 2021. These partnerships range from helping the government of the **Democratic Republic of the Congo** (DRC) develop a technology and innovation framework for the Ministry of Research and Technological Innovation to working with waste picker associations in **Paraguay** to generate [ethnographic insights](#) for Country Office programs.

The MTE points to the Labs' ability to build relationships with grassroots actors over traditional partners in the development sector, positively shifting partnerships towards smaller, local actors with rich knowledge of the problem. For example, during the COVID-19 response, the **UNDP Accelerator Lab in Nepal** established an exchange between local partners drawing on the existing robotics community and hospitals. Through this networking function, local actors developed a pilot robot that

successfully delivered food and non-urgent supplies to patients to encourage physical distancing in hospitals.

“The Labs’ ability to prioritize local relationships with unusual subjects over the usual big players in the development sector is positively shifting practice towards grassroots local solutions and ownership.”

- Midterm Evaluation 2021

In addition, the MTE shows that 50 percent of the Labs’ first cohort brought in new funding and in-kind resources, enabling UNDP to grow experimental approaches and emerging solutions. Building on the work of their Lab, **UNDP Colombia** worked with a tech company to create augmented reality experiences that enabled UNDP to assess the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 in remote areas. Intrigued by the approach, the local USAID mission decided to get involved and the Country Office received \$9.8 million in investment from USAID for connecting a [value chain of stakeholders](#), from research to design in order to mass produce COVID-19 protective gear locally. This initial investment was boosted by an additional \$14 million from the Bogotá Environment Secretariat and mayor’s office. Such cases indicate the capacity for the Labs to grow emerging solutions and experimental approaches in the form of service lines both within UNDP and among a range of external partners.

Learning

With multiple forms of knowledge surfacing across all 91 Labs, the Network is tapping into its constantly changing, evolving and non-linear, robust knowledge flows. This is moving the frontier and re-inventing knowledge management by taking advantage of computational science to follow emergent learning and unearth tacit knowledge relevant to sustainable development problems. As a result, the Labs are creating **a vibrant virtual learning network**.

“There is a rethinking and repurposing of traditional tools for reporting and action planning, a wide range of systematic ways of creating inspiration, support and knowledge sharing. There are new spaces for reflection as well as new kinds of knowledge management and curation.”

- Midterm Evaluation 2021

On average, the Network exchanges more than 250 messages across regions and publishes one public blog a day. This unusually high level of activity results in many forms of cross-country collaboration. The ["Learning from Innovation"](#) knowledge series from the Latin American bureau is an example of a Regional Bureau aiming to advance its understanding of key structural development challenges by capturing emerging lessons learned from the Accelerator Labs' innovative approaches to tackling these issues in countries across the region.

Culture

Finally, the MTE notes the influence the Accelerator Labs have had on UNDP's culture. The report finds evidence to support this idea in more agile and experimental mindsets as part of responding to COVID-19, new organizational approaches and a move away from command and control towards greater collaboration and mutual trust.

For example, the **UNDP Lebanon Accelerator Lab** enabled an agile response to the Beirut Blast of 2020, as three days after the explosion, a partnership with the Surge Data Hub allowed [leveraging a data pipeline](#) from social media for emergency response, which continues to be used today. Diversifying solutions, the **UNDP Barbados Accelerator Lab** [partnered with startups](#) to explore the use of sargassum seaweed as a biodegradable alternative to single-use plastic.

The MTE draws further attention to how the Accelerator Labs have potential to influence national policies: findings indicate a range of government innovation initiatives which have either been influenced or set up as a result of the Accelerator Labs' capability. This is the Accelerator Lab Network scaling beyond UNDP into national and local governments — transferring and expanding the approaches of sensemaking, scanning and experimentation into government functions.



Looking ahead: a roadmap for success

Based on the findings presented, the MTE asserts that the Accelerator Lab Network already shows strong signs of success against its three initial design outcomes, as well as practices that sit outside of the original scope and are important to the wider UNDP organization and its progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Accelerator Labs are making impact on the ground – mapping thousands of solutions, empowering grassroots partners on the frontlines, recognizing the centrality of informality in development and facilitating scale through government policies.

As we look toward the next phase of the Labs, we will continue innovating on the ground while injecting new approaches into UNDP to ensure that continuous learning and innovation become a central feature in sustainable development practice.

[Read the full report](#)



Chapter 3: Strengthening our Capabilities, Accelerating Learning and Adapting to Change

3.1 Developing new capabilities to improve how we understand problems and find solutions to drive forward sustainable development with national counterparts.

The UNDP Accelerator Labs were created to explore diverse contexts and challenging development spaces where there are no maps to follow. How do we do it? The Labs incorporate new data sources and innovation methods and use the wide range of expertise available to tackle complex issues in 115 developing countries.

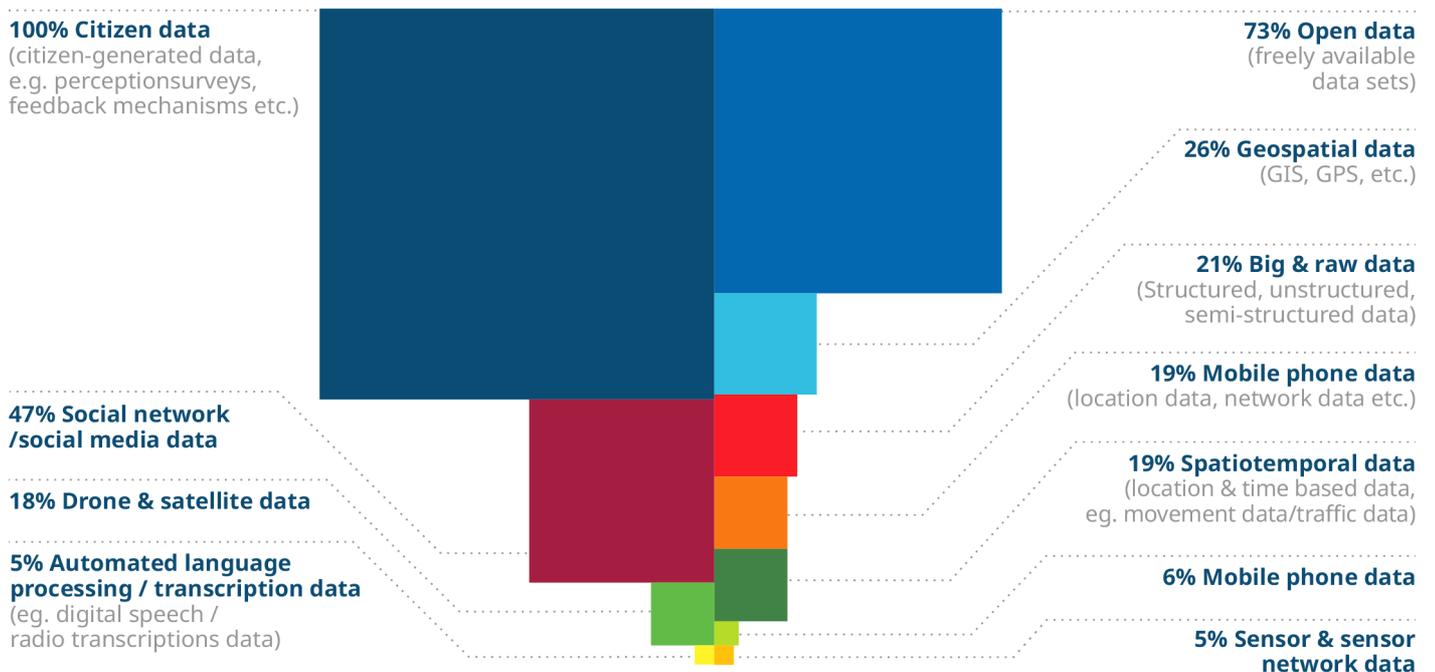
Lab members also bring **diverse innovation skills** to their work, leading to increased capacity for understanding sustainable development problems at a grassroots level. This has been particularly useful during the past two years when interventions were necessary to address urgent and unexpected needs due to the COVID-19 crisis. This flexible capability of the Accelerator Labs enabled country programs to leverage the Labs to help meet pandemic-related exigencies.

3.1.1 Increasing and diversifying our data sources

Adding new and more diverse data sources has been a key pillar of the Accelerator Lab model to stay abreast of the speed of change. Since 2020, the Lab Network has introduced **29 new kinds of innovative and unusual data sources** which create a more granular and near-real-time understanding of development challenges. On average, each Lab is tapping into **between four and five different data sources** each year. These are often proof-of-concept experiments – tapping into insights which are otherwise unavailable through traditional sources of survey data.

Throughout the network, the most widely used data sources have been **social media data, open data, and citizen-generated data**. In 2021, the Labs also started using new types of data sources, for example, cultural probes to understand the barriers to formality in **Paraguay**, crowdsourced photos in **Ukraine** to map changes in tourism hotspots and participatory observation in **Samoa** that allowed Lab members to shadow and map out experiences with the birth registration system in the country.

Most used data sources across the Network in 2021



CASE STUDY:

Data for Learning in Zimbabwe's Food Sector:

Using new data and mental models to deeply understand the complexity of food systems in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, hunger is one of the major drivers of urban poverty. To better understand the challenges and complexity of the food systems in the country, the **UNDP Zimbabwe Accelerator Lab** team partnered with private sector companies to study how informal workers sell produce and correlate these insights with two-and-a-half years' worth of volume and pricing data. Results of this experiment have given the team a deep understanding of the informal market and how the food supply chain works, something the government has indicated is a pressing need in the country.



A produce vendor in Harare, Zimbabwe. For the most vulnerable urban population, outdoor vending tends to be the only source of income. Photo: UNDP Zimbabwe Accelerator Lab

The Lab understood that [there is a need to combine a variety of different data](#) for a 3-dimensional view [to see the problem from all sides](#). The first step was to find and uncover new data sources, for example by using Viamo, a mobile carrier, to undertake citizen surveys of women vendors. The second step was to look at available data in new ways using, for example, [augmented reality \(AR\)](#).

When COVID-19 hit, the Lab had to rethink the way that vendors would be able to keep food moving and to make the supply chain more transparent and more efficient for this and future crises. They devised a system to bridge the digital divide between the informal sector and the formal economy through data collection and sharing, and linking vendors with suppliers, transporters, warehouses, retailers, consumers and other partners in the food supply value chain. This digital project was embedded into UNDP as part of a nationwide program called the “Safe Markets Program.” Learning from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Safe Markets Programs is aimed at making informal market spaces and supply chains more resilient to disruptions. It also creates safe spaces for women to trade and has potential for scaling to other cities.

“We need to look at people as our partners. They have the capacity to mobilize. They gave us the opportunity to find data that avoided bureaucracy. The vendor associations created WhatsApp groups and gathered information they were willing to share with us.”

– UNDP Zimbabwe Accelerator Lab Team

UNDP Zimbabwe, through its Accelerator Lab, created a dashboard to visualize volume and pricing data *in real time*, across the main markets in Zimbabwe. This platform allows policymakers and businesses to understand the demand and supply of produce around Zimbabwe to mitigate the over and under-supply in informal marketplaces. One important example of the insights created for policy makers relates to Zimbabwe’s main crop, corn (maize). The visualization helped decision makers understand that maize is not climate resilient and needs to be replaced with local, nutritious and climate-friendly crops.



Using Augmented Reality (AR), the UNDP Zimbabwe Accelerator Lab presents findings at UNGA in 2020.

“There is so much data out there and we can use it to pull out insights that enable us to work faster and better. We can use it to lobby governments and really move the conversation along.”

– UNDP Zimbabwe Accelerator Lab Team

The Lab took on another challenge: how to tell a “**data story**” in a memorable way. New technology, like virtual or augmented reality (VR/AR) can tell a more compelling story and add multiple layers to the comprehension of data, to help governments understand the informal sector, and make better investment decisions going forward.

◇ [Watch](#): Data-driven solutions in Zimbabwe.

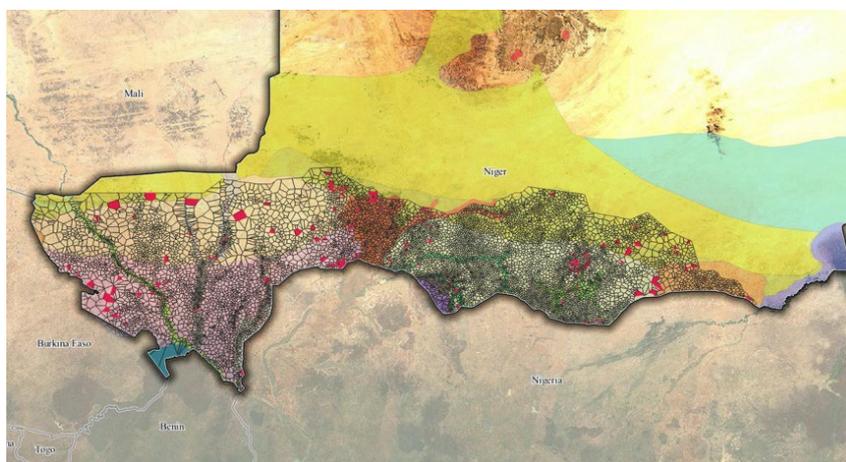


DATA POWERED POSITIVE DEVIANCE

In every community there are individuals or groups who develop unconventional practices that help them deal with challenges better than their peers. That's positive deviance. Using an approach called **Data Powered Positive Deviance**, the Accelerator Labs partnered with the GIZ Data Lab, the University of Manchester Center for Digital Development and the UN Global Pulse Lab Jakarta to identify such practices, understand what makes them different and successful, and mobilize the rest of their communities to emulate those practices.

By using readily available but under-utilized data such as satellite imagery, social media data, among others it is possible to find these "positively deviant" groups, communities or spaces. Building on results from four experiments from the UNDP Accelerator Labs in [Ecuador](#), [Mexico](#), [Niger](#) and [Somalia](#), the report, "**Learning from the Edges**," documents how to use data to identify positive deviants and explores how they can be leveraged as part of locally-led sustainable development efforts to advance the Global Goals.

- ◇ Read the report, "[Learning from the Edges](#)" and the companion [DPPD Handbook](#) which is a step-by-step guide for development practitioners to apply the Data Powered Positive Deviance method.



Potential positively deviant communities (red) in southern Niger.

Snapshot: Positive Deviance pilot project in Niger

In [Niger](#), where sustained agriculture is under tremendous pressure as climate change and the reduction of rainfall affect crop cycles, the Accelerator Lab identifies and scales practices of positively deviant cereal-growing communities that produce healthy yields of sorghum and pearl millet.

3.1.2 Identifying and documenting development solutions and celebrating grassroots innovators

The Accelerator Labs have embedded **solutions mapping** into the daily practice of the 91 UNDP Country Offices where they work. Through this, UNDP is promoting grassroots-led solutions as a tool to move beyond the business-as-usual development programs that often operate in a top-down manner. Solutions mapping finds things that *work* and then expands on them.

In 2021, the Accelerator Lab Network expanded its reach by identifying, documenting, and sharing **a wide range of grassroots solutions tackling development challenges across all the SDGs**. The Labs extended over 2,000 solutions to **1,272 locations around the world**. For example, the platform now includes 196 agriculture-related grassroots solutions, which range from pest repellents and organic fertilizers to water-saving solutions.

By regarding local innovators as “research and development teams” and working with local partners to map and acknowledge their own assets, the Labs augment and amplify solutions for development problems. Each of these solutions tells a story about an existing unmet need, an emerging challenge and helps UNDP offices and their national government partners to improve program and policy design.



Abdi Karim stitches together leather sheaths for daggers with recycled plastic thread.

INNOVATOR PROFILE: Abdi Karim

Blacksmiths in Kenya: indigenous knowledge for informal waste management

In a blacksmith shop nestled in the Orahey market in Wajir county, Kenya, indigenous knowledge is used to recycle waste into useful tools and household implements.

“We inherited this trade from our forefathers and our ancestors. You can call us ancestral industrialists.”

- **Abdi Karim, blacksmith**

“We collect discarded plastic water tanks, plastic seats, scrap metal,” Mr. Karim continued, seated next to a heap of assorted colored plastic. “If it breaks, that’s when we use it.” The blacksmiths help keep products out of landfills, and also offer repair services for salvageable items.

UNDP Kenya, powered by its Accelerator Lab, is learning from indigenous knowledge to understand how informal workplaces contributed to resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since waste management and recycling in the country are characterized by high informality, the Accelerator Lab is devising ways that the private sector can partner with informal sector workers – like the blacksmiths – in an effective, scalable and sustainable manner.

- ◇ [Watch](#): Blacksmiths at work in Wajir
- ◇ [Read more](#) about the Lab’s learnings



Erico Pinheiro sets up his drone for delivery.

INNOVATOR PROFILE: Erico Pinheiro

Drone system delivers medical supplies to remote islands in Cape Verde

Computer scientist **Erico Pinheiro** invented a drone system to deliver medical supplies to the remote communities of his island nation Cape Verde, but he needed support to test and scale it. He submitted his Seed Plant Drone, a frugal innovation that was originally designed to [carry seeds and help combat desertification](#) on the archipelago, to the **UNDP Cape Verde Accelerator Lab’s** “Lab Open Day.” As the pandemic hit, Erico rapidly pivoted and repurposed his solution to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Cape Verde. With support from the Accelerator Lab, this solution is now reaching the smallest and farthest islands -- places it would take days for medical professionals to access -- and is being scaled: As a result of this experimentation, two drones will be delivered to the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment in Santo Antão and the municipality of Maio island.

- ◇ [View the video piece featured on BBC News](#)



*Kerri-Ann Bovell, Appreciation
Award winner for her bioplastic*

Snapshot:

The Honey Bee Network Creativity & Inclusive Innovation Awards

This year, our knowledge partner the [Honey Bee Network](#) announced [18 awards](#) given to exceptional grassroots innovations that address unmet social needs. 2,500 entries from 87 countries were considered. Eight of the 18 winners were **UNDP Accelerator Lab**-scouted solutions, which expanded the geographical reach of the awards beyond India:

- [One Peso Internet](#) from the Philippines
- [Training dogs to prevent gender violence](#) from Ecuador
- [Mobile app to identify mosquitoes](#) to prevent vector-borne diseases from Argentina
- ["Galah Tuis"](#) (a fruit packing/wrapping pole) from Malaysia
- [Smartphone with an inbuilt body temperature](#) sensor from Uganda
- [Life Shelter](#) for displaced population from Iraq
- [Interactive toy soap from Iraq](#) (COVID award)
- [Cassava & Sargassum Bioplastic](#) from Barbados (Appreciation)

INNOVATOR PROFILE: Andrea Mosquera

Innovation from Empathy: training dogs to prevent gender-based violence in Ecuador

Andrea Mosquera is a founding member of [ARNUV \(Non-violence Rapid Action\)](#) and a curator for their project, "Project Violet" which trains street dogs to protect abused women and other vulnerable people. She tells her personal story as part of her activism.

Andrea is a woman living with cerebral palsy who was assaulted by a man while walking in a park. A dog approached suddenly and barked so insistently that the man had to let her go. She shared her experience as part of the "[Human Library](#)" event, organized by the **UNDP Ecuador Accelerator Lab** as part of the Lab's investigations into grassroots solutions to community problems.

◇ [Hear her tell her personal story.](#)



*Andrea Mosquera is an activist with a group that trains dogs to protect women from gender-based violence.
Photo courtesy of ARNUV.*



Improving hygiene, one toy at a time.

INNOVATOR PROFILE

Introducing Surprise Soaps, a simple solution for better hygiene for children

[Ravin Rizgar](#) of [Field Ready](#) knew that children needed to wash their hands more, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. So she invented Surprise Soaps: small, clear soaps for children with a 3-D printed plastic toy visible inside. The more children wash their hands, the quicker they're rewarded with the toy. It's a simple recipe: Surprise Soaps + children = more handwashing; more handwashing = fewer diseases.

The UNDP Iraq Accelerator Lab realized the benefits of this solution and its scalability. They took an active role in promoting the solution, [highlighting the idea](#) in UNDP's official social media pages for a broader audience and adding it to the global platform of Accelerator Labs' solutions. They submitted it to Accelerator Lab partner, the Honey Bee Network, where it won for its COVID-19 focused solution.

How do we know how well this idea works? In a 2019 research project with Save the Children and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, children's use of the Surprise Soaps was tested in an Iraqi refugee camp. Children washed their hands *four times* as often with the Surprise Soaps as they did with traditional soap. Their hygienic habits often spread to family members and helped reduce diseases such as cholera and pneumonia, which spread easily in crowded refugee camps.

3.1.3 Identifying innovative solutions to the climate crisis

The Accelerator Labs and the climate crisis: a session tailored for founding investors

In 2021, **50 percent of the Labs worked on climate crisis-**related issues such as agriculture, deforestation, biodiversity, solid waste management, disaster risk management, air pollution and circular, blue and green economies.

To share the learning created by these experiments, the UNDP Accelerator Labs invited its founding investors to focus on the climate crisis in a virtual event on June 17, 2021. The Accelerator Labs from **UNDP Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Viet Nam** and **Ukraine** shared how they tap into new data sources, combine them with ethnographic insights and build portfolios of experiments to

progressively unpack large and complex challenges related to climate change. They also demonstrated how they map, amplify and scale local solutions that communities have already developed by introducing entrepreneurs to address the most pressing development challenges.

- ◇ [Read](#) about the informative session



INNOVATOR PROFILE: DARILYN SMART

Inventing new tools for farmers facing climate change in Trinidad and Tobago

The **UNDP Trinidad and Tobago Accelerator Lab** is focusing on supporting local actors like Darilyn Smart. Darilyn is a local entrepreneur and an inventor who observed how farmers suffered from the effects of climate change.

With four other businesswomen in Trinidad and Tobago, she invented “Crop Mate” to aid farmers with real-time AI-powered information about their crops by monitoring the soil quality. She was able to promote her green innovation to a wider audience as a finalist in the UNDP Trinidad and Tobago Accelerator Lab’s Green Innovation Challenge.

- ◇ [Watch](#): Darilyn Smart talks about Crop Mate.

Entrepreneur Darilyn Smart, along with four other women, developed a new AI-powered tool to help farmers with their crops. Photo: Darilyn Smart

INNOVATOR PROFILE: NOMUNTU NDHLOVU

Turning food waste into a natural solution for small-scale farmers

Nomuntu Ndhlovu, Director of [UNTUM Solutions South Africa](#), is a young, passionate entrepreneur looking to grow her business and give back to her community. The **UNDP South Africa Accelerator Lab** partnered with the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship in South Africa for the [Food Waste Innovation Challenge](#) and Nomuntu was one of the entrepreneurs selected. With the Lab’s support, she will scale-up her system for breeding black soldier flies that reduces food waste in an environmentally sustainable way. Her vision is to replicate a low-tech version of this system for small-scale farmers in rural communities.



Nomuntu Ndhlovu sources compost for her black soldier fly breeding system. Photo: Mia Louw

Composting, which normally takes about six months to complete, can happen much faster with the black soldier fly. The fly can quicken the process to about 10 to 14 days. “The flies are also actually a very clean source of protein because once they reach the fly stage, they don’t feed on any food, they just leave water and then reproduce,” she said in a UNDP Accelerator Lab Twitter Spaces session on food security. UNTUM Solutions plans to process 360 tons of food waste annually with this system.

- ◇ [Listen](#) to the Twitter Spaces session featuring Nomuntu

INNOVATOR PROFILE

Project MOL finds a solution to plastic waste with wax moth-larvae



The MOL team (l to r): Vasyl Poluyko, Volodymyr Merlavsky, Olesya Poluyko, Lubko Matsekh. Photo: Khrystyna Korniiichuk

When we think of solutions to sustainable development problems, we likely don't think about insects as problem-solvers. "Project MOL Eats My Plastic" is an innovation that offers the safe disposal of polyethylene plastic with the help of a **wax-moth**. This innovation was a winner of the National Biomimicry Competition, organized by the **UNDP Ukraine Accelerator Lab** and The Biomimicry Institute (USA). The Lab was investigating the [use of biomimicry](#): looking to nature to develop solutions to sustainability problems. With support from the Lab, the project went on to the international Biomimicry Global Design Challenge and was [named one of 12 finalists](#).

The Project MOL team uses moth larvae to feed on polyethylene and produce organic matter that is widely used in industry and agriculture. The way it works is a complex science puzzle, but the innovation reveals that moth larvae can digest polyethylene waste in special containers with no additional energy or chemical resources needed while obtaining organic matter as a result!



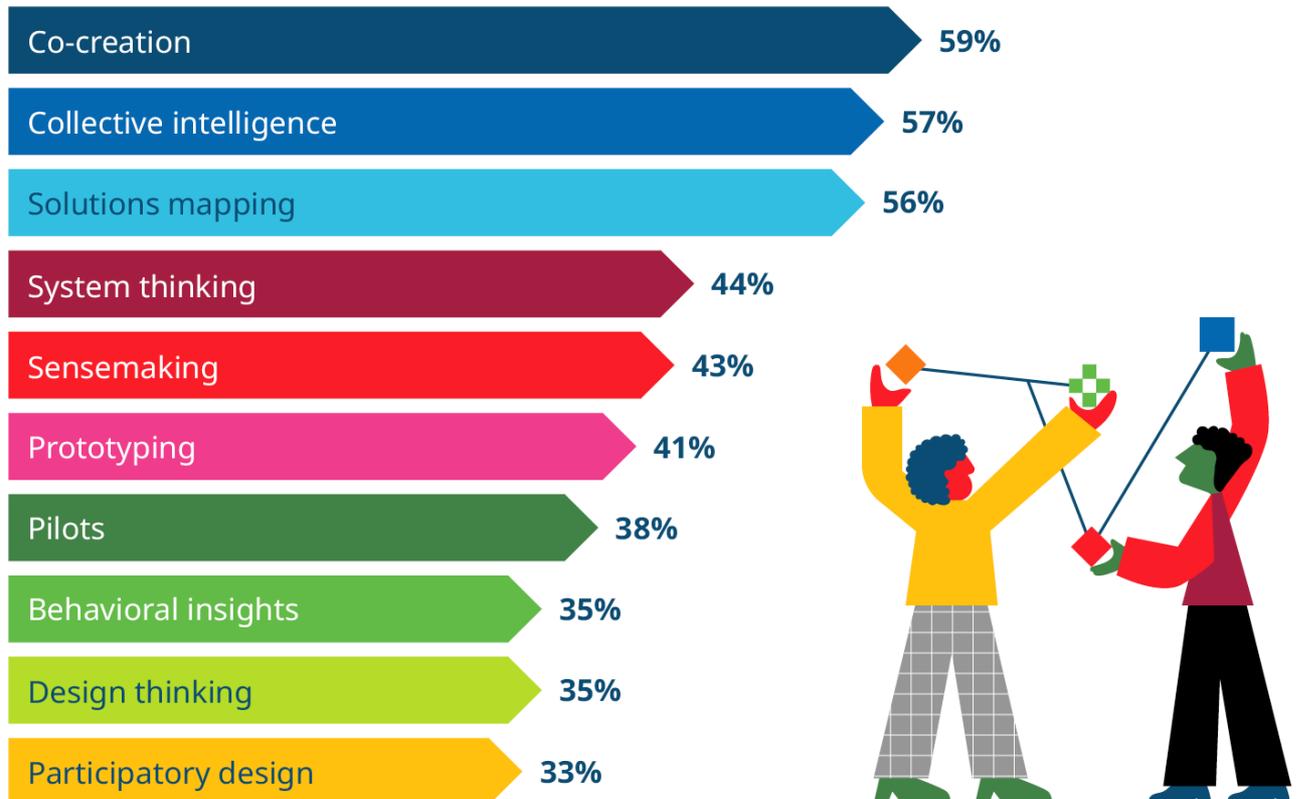
◇ [Watch the video about this incredible innovation.](#)

Wax moth larvae harvesting. Photo: Khrystyna Korniiichuk

3.1.4 Bringing in a wide variety of methods to find, test and iterate solutions

The Accelerator Lab Network integrated **52 innovation methods** into UNDP programming this year. Collective intelligence, co-creation, systems thinking, solutions mapping and sensemaking continue to be the most used innovation methods throughout the Network. In 2021 we also saw new methods mainstreamed into the Network, such as citizen science, participatory design and positive deviance. Injection of new methods is how Labs help UNDP reimagine development for the 21st century.

Most used innovation methods across the Network

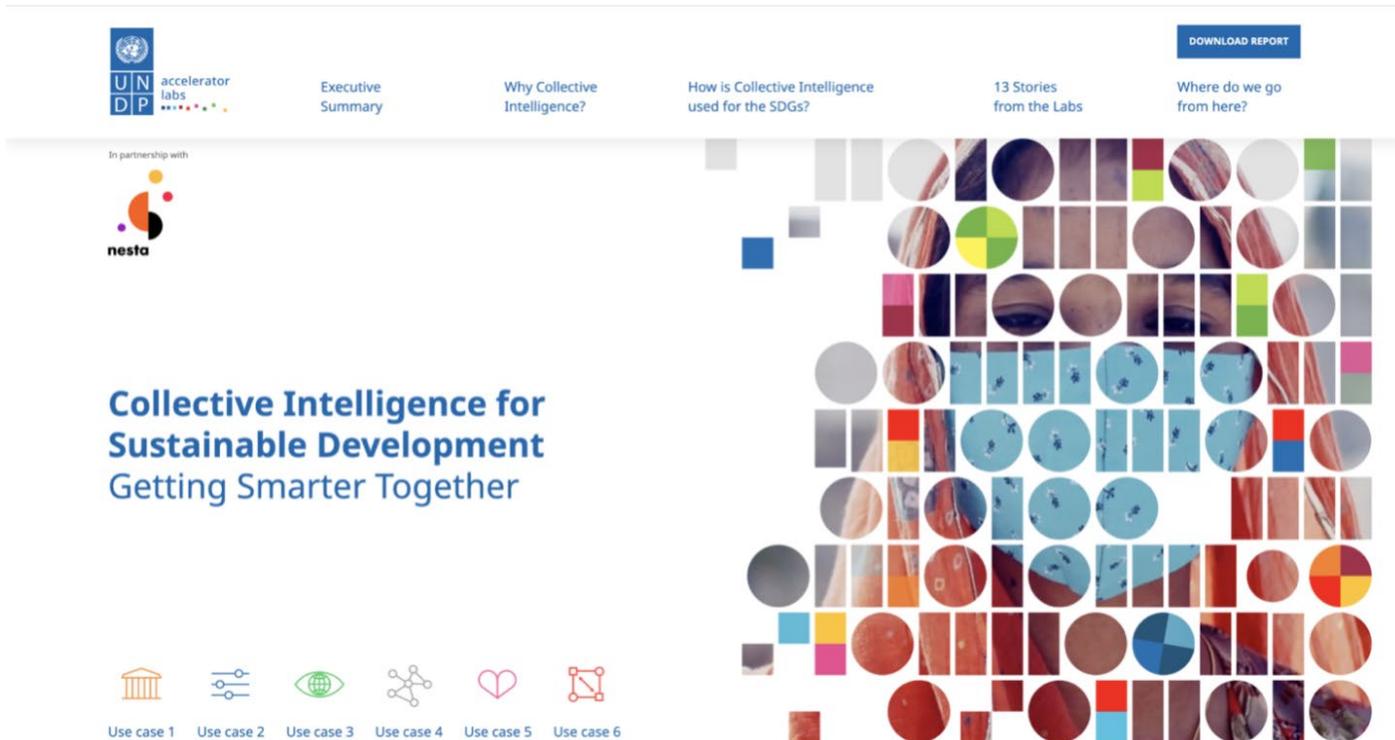


Innovation methods in practice

The **UNDP Paraguay Accelerator Lab** has used **participatory observation** to map and understand the [experience of waste pickers](#) in the recycling process. This method mapped 223 hours in the lives of male and female members of the Recycler's Association to surface insights that are helping improve waste management in the capital city, Asunción.

As part of their Informal Economy portfolio, **UNDP Angola Accelerator Lab** is engaging local vendor associations in policy research and design. The Lab used **micro-narratives** to understand how informal vendors perceived the general functioning of urban markets in the country.

The **UNDP Kenya Accelerator Lab** and its partner, the Busara Centre for Behavioural Economics, used **behavioral insights** to conduct an experiment with 120 volunteers to create insight into how young people handle misinformation on the internet.



3.1.5 Collective Intelligence for Sustainable Development report and launch event

Groundbreaking research: Collective Intelligence for Sustainable Development: a global launch event and report

No country, government or organization has the full blueprint to reach the goals set by Agenda 2030. We all need to learn what works and what doesn't to drive inclusion and sustainability in global development. This is why we need to tap into the intelligence that drives the actions of almost 8 billion people: to create breakthroughs that transform the systems that will determine whether future generations can meet their needs.

We need to get smarter together

On 2 June 2021, the UNDP Accelerator Labs and the Nesta Centre for Collective Intelligence virtually launched the [Collective Intelligence for Sustainable Development report](#) under the leadership of Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator, together with the Qatar Fund for Development and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.



Collective Intelligence for Sustainable Development
13 Stories from the UNDP Accelerator Labs



The virtual event was attended by over 500 attendees and presented the methods and tools employed by over 200 private and public sector organizations in this discipline. It also brought inspiration for decision makers to orchestrate collective intelligence more strategically and at scale. The report presents comprehensive research of over 277 case studies that present how diverse collective intelligence approaches are being used to speed-up progress on all 17 SDGs. It is a call to make it standard practice to channel the innovations, knowledge and contributions of people across the globe, to get serious about the move toward real time data, and to find responsible ways of using artificial intelligence to elevate human intelligence.

◇ **Read the report at smartertogether.earth**

From the event:

"This is the logic behind our Accelerator Lab Network: tapping into distributed, often informal or tacit knowledge and then trying to capture and spread that collective intelligence."

– Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator

"Technology, like art, is a soaring exercise of the human imagination. The Collective Intelligence report is a means to utilize the promise of collective intelligence to help hasten development and urgently overturn the retrogressing trends on numerous SDGs."

– His Excellency Khalifa Al-Kuwari, Director General for Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD)

◇ **Watch** the recording of the virtual event [here](#).

"Knowledge and innovation are key for development and a global public good. The challenge in its complexity is to bring it to the people, and the collective intelligence approach is a promising approach. Knowledge doesn't have to be transferred from North to South in achieving the SDGs, it has to be extracted everywhere."

– Dr. Jürgen Zattler, Director General for International Development Policy, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)



Collective Intelligence Case Studies

The report showcased [13 case studies](#) from the Accelerator Labs. For each, the report highlights which collective intelligence methods are used (natural language processing, crowdsourcing, citizen science to name a few) and what development challenge is addressed.



Snapshot:

Using open data and social media data to prevent gender violence in Mexico

In **Mexico**, there is an urgent need to increase the safety of public spaces for women. By combining open data about urban infrastructure with government datasets about measures taken to improve women's safety, along with crowd mapping and analysis of social media data, UNDP Mexico, powered by its Accelerator Lab, helped create an understanding of which spaces were safest and why.



Snapshot:

Using participatory sensing to improve waste management in Viet Nam

In **Viet Nam**, as in many countries, hundreds of informal waste workers divert waste from landfills across the country. It is a largely invisible contribution. The Accelerator Lab used participatory sensing -- attaching GPS trackers to the workers' bicycles -- and mapped the routes they took through two districts. Through the creation of actionable intelligence, there is now a better understanding of the recycling opportunities and vulnerabilities of this waste management ecosystem.

Empowering decision-makers with collective intelligence

The next step for getting smarter together for the SDGs is to orchestrate collective intelligence more strategically and at scale. The many excellent initiatives referenced in this report on collective intelligence for sustainable development are often fragmented. Investment is needed in more initiatives that help connect local, small-scale projects into a **global knowledge commons**, creating usable and useful open data, open science and open innovations that are available to everyone.



3.2 Embedding and scaling our suite of innovation practices and methods into UNDP Country Programs.

As the Labs introduce new ways of working to accelerate learning on sustainable development, they are also **changing the way UNDP designs and delivers development programs**. The Labs have become conveners and facilitators for UNDP Country Offices. For example, they often support the creation of the multi-year Country Program Documents (CPDs) design process and contribute to the creation of integrated portfolios and program pipelines.

By bringing in new innovation methods, the Labs are helping both in the design and implementation phase of programs and creating alignment between operational and programmatic functions of UNDP. The Labs' interventions – introducing methods such as portfolio sensemaking, foresight and systems thinking – also create space for more future-oriented decision making in terms of programmatic investments.

For example, with support from the UNDP Strategic Innovation Unit, **29 Accelerator Labs** have begun **portfolio sensemaking** exercises to find threads of innovation across governance, environmental, poverty and gender equality work and to align UNDP programming to the external pace of change. The portfolio sensemaking processes have direct influence on new and forthcoming programmes of operation country programmes.

The Accelerator Labs are also influencing how government counterparts think about and deliver development by embedding innovation into the public sector. In 2021, **28 Accelerator Labs reported that they were actively working with national governments** to improve innovation policy or to build innovation skills in the public sector.



Ehsan Gul, UNDP Pakistan Accelerator Lab Head of Solutions Mapping, workshoping with colleagues. Photo: UNDP Pakistan

Snapshot:
Preparing UNDP for the knowable future

The **UNDP Pakistan Accelerator Lab**, in collaboration with the UNDP Pakistan policy unit, introduced **foresight** as an innovation method during the planning phase of Country Office programming. Foresight is helping UNDP Pakistan and other countries to explore

plausible futures that could arise in the next few years and how to prepare for the challenges ahead. Introducing foresight increases UNDP's capacity to overcome short-termism and make inroads toward long-term systems change.



A tree is planted in Punta del Diablo to contribute to the native forest restoration. Photo: Antartida Films

Snapshot:
Innovative fundraising for government initiatives in Uruguay

Crowdfunding was an untapped funding mechanism in Uruguay, ripe with opportunity. In 2021, The **UNDP Uruguay Accelerator Lab** together with [Plantatón Uruguay](#) and the Ministry of Agriculture set up a

crowdfunding campaign that promotes individual commitment and collective financing to regenerate native forests in 40 different urban and rural spaces in the country. Funders can support the planting and take care of 10,000 new native trees in selected spaces.

CASE STUDY:

Supporting national governments in a time of crisis: convening innovators to create an affordable mask pipeline for Togolese citizens

For Togo, as in the rest of the world, the early days of COVID-19 created panic as people sought to protect themselves with personal protective equipment (PPE). Items like masks and hand sanitizer were quickly in short supply and became luxury products overnight. The Lab connected with international organizations such as the Grenoble University Hospital and the French Standardization Association (AFNOR), which oversaw quality control and assessment for PPE. By using and testing cloth that was locally made and locally available, the masks would be much cheaper than industrially made masks.



From theory to practice, craftsmen take action. Photo: Nunyalab

The Lab saw an opportunity to harness the talents of local seamstresses and tailors, idle since the outbreak of the pandemic, and to work with them to create alternative fabric-based masks. They brought together a wide range of stakeholders such as the Lab-supported start-up incubator NunyaLab, the Union of Regional Chambers of Trades and the National Health Insurance Institute, to organize and finance learning sessions. Together with NunyaLab the Lab shared the knowledge acquired by local seamstresses and tailors publicly by creating a [“How to make your own face mask”](#) tutorial video (in French, broken down in four bite-sized parts) which was shared via WhatsApp and YouTube, and people started making their own masks.

By the end of this initiative, [over 800 artisans had made more than 1 million reusable masks](#) sold in pairs for 350 CFA francs (US\$0.50), 65 percent cheaper than masks available in the early days of the COVID-19 outbreak.

“The world is crumbling but we are out there on the front lines doing something, making something happen. And now, two years after, people are still interested in contributing. It’s not just a Lab thing, it’s a people thing.”

– UNDP Togo Accelerator Lab Team

What was remarkable to the Lab was that citizens, especially young people, stepped in to invent solutions themselves, rather on waiting for outside help. UNDP was able to tap into that emerging effort and open a niche for development. This potential is often not recognized. The Lab saw how the **innovation ecosystem** exists outside of regular silos and they learned how to bring people together on a common issue. By empowering people, they can find and share solutions to these challenges.

- ◇ **Read: COVID-19: how we tapped into local innovation and the maker movement to address the PPE shortage**



Snapshot:
Influencing local government in Argentina to use citizen science to better understand air quality with DIY hardware and citizen cyclists.

In Buenos Aires, **UNDP Argentina**, powered by its Accelerator Lab, tested a new way to collect data on air pollution by placing air quality sensors on bicycles to generate a city-level map of pollution “hotspots.” The Accelerator Lab used this participatory citizen science to better understand air quality across different parts of Buenos Aires and gather a more granular understanding of where localized hotspots (such as traffic junctions)

exceed acceptable levels of pollution.

The data collected has been shared and discussed with the Argentina Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development *and* the city government in Buenos Aires who continue to work with the Accelerator Lab to evaluate **scaling this citizen science project across the entire country** over the next three years. The work is still in its early stages, but collaborative efforts are advancing the project perspectives to use this unique and grassroots-led solution and to ensure that the data created through the citizen sensors has a clear route to impact.

- ◇ [Read](#): Using DIY hardware and citizen sensing to measure changes in air quality in Argentina.

Snapshot:
Influencing national innovation policy through the Pintig Lab in the Philippines



Pintig means “Heartbeat” in Filipino, and the Pintig Lab, designed to measure the country’s socio-economic health, is aptly named. The **UNDP Philippines**

Accelerator Lab set up the lab, a multidisciplinary network of data scientists, economists, epidemiologists, mathematicians and political scientists, tasked with supporting data-driven crisis response and development strategies. The Pintig Lab uses non-traditional data, like household spending on consumer-packaged goods, to address the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 and the pace of recovery. **The Philippine National Economic Development Agency will incorporate this data for their GDP forecasting.**

- ◇ [Read the Forbes article](#) about this example of leveraging non-traditional data for COVID-19 recovery.



3.3 Establishing a global learning and scaling network

While each Lab creates value in country, the Network of Labs was set up to accelerate learning on what works in development.

The Labs are sharing actionable learning on a daily basis. As we strive to become the largest and fastest learning network on sustainable development, we've embarked on a journey of blogging to **work out loud – defaulting to open our learnings and activities** – while continuously experimenting with new methods, tools and ways of working. This enables the UNDP Accelerator Lab Network to capture learning on sustainable development, share actionable intelligence and grow our collective knowledge. This year the Accelerator Labs have written 321 blogs in six languages. On social media, the Global Team has experimented with new interactions like Twitter Spaces and open seminars. We've integrated virtual into our bloodstream, with the Collective Intelligence Workshop and the SDG Action Festival which gathered over 2,000 virtual participants outside the Lab Network.

In 2021, that virtual Network exchange has been very vibrant, with 49 weekly global calls with the Network with an average of 92 Lab members attending per week. Through the WhatsApp groups, where Lab members can ask for help, share reflections or simply exchange ideas, the Labs have engaged in around 1,200 separate thematic conversations in 2021, sometimes sharing up to 300 messages in a single day.

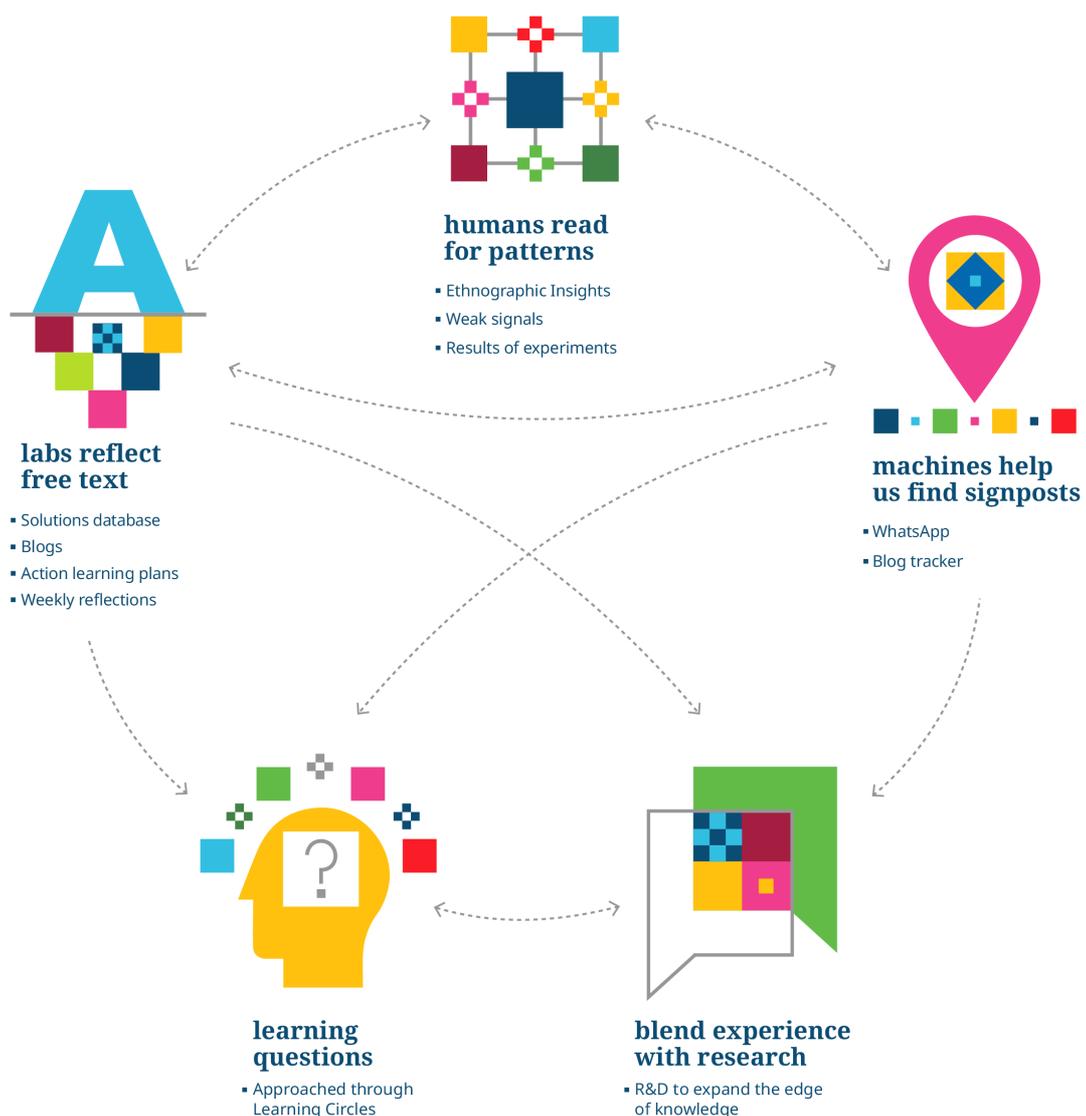
3.3.1 A network learning strategy: with informality as our new research agenda

A key function of the UNDP Accelerator Lab Network is **to sense and surface frontier knowledge about critical development challenges** that would be otherwise hard to unearth.

As a global Network, we create various forms of knowledge. We locate experiential knowledge on how to deploy a wide range of innovation methods. We generate new forms of ethnographic evidence that unpacks the practices, know-how and inventions of local problem solvers. We cultivate weak signals of change and we glean actionable learning from the results of our experiments.

With these multiple forms of knowledge surfacing across all our 91 Labs, what we are tapping into is constantly changing and evolving. The result is non-linear, robust knowledge flows based on a distributed, decentralized system. This is moving the frontier and **re-inventing knowledge management**. In 2021, we developed our **Network Learning Prototype** to illuminate how it is done.

Networking Learning Flow



3.3.2 The Network Learning Prototype

Our **Network Learning Prototype** creates five key steps for how we surface and document knowledge from the Lab Network. As an initial step, our Labs reflect on their work in free form. Given the exceedingly distributed way of working across the Network, we use machines to identify signposts to know where to look and what to focus on. We then look at the data points, coupled with our Labs' reflections and blogs to identify patterns we see surfacing from the bottom up. From there, we set our research and development priorities and develop learning questions which articulate and investigate the edge of knowledge.

This process led us to identify our first research and development topic: **informal economic activities and the informal sector globally**.

We conducted a series of “**learning circles**” from March to November 2021 to delve into this research agenda on informality. Learning circles are facilitated conversations with our Labs to surface tacit, experiential and unstructured knowledge. In this way we do a deep dive, asking ourselves, for example, [*what does going digital mean for informal economies?*](#) What are the implications for an informal business and what parts of the value chain are going digital? Could digital platforms designed for informal businesses and traders enable them to reach a broader consumer base and access financial services? What are the risks in this transition that we should be aware of to ensure fairness, equity and sustainability? What is the connection between digitalization and formalization? These sessions are designed to excavate insights into how governments and partners can tap into the ingenuity and creativity of over 1 billion informal workers globally.

Through this Network Learning Prototype, we now have a **model in motion** to transform centrally driven knowledge management and R&D into a distributed model that acknowledges diversity and continuous change across multiple local contexts. [Read more](#) about our work on reinventing knowledge management.



Customers can use the My Lumo app to buy goods and services they would normally need to buy in-person from informal traders.

**Snapshot:
Digitally transforming
informal markets in The
Gambia**

In The Gambia, the Lab supported local informal traders, particularly women and youth, through “[My Lumo](#),” a digital e-commerce platform [that allows local informal traders to market their goods and services and transact electronically](#). Once a vendor is registered on the

platform and the goods and services are uploaded with price and other relevant details, online trading can be facilitated more easily as a form of e-commerce with an inbuilt online payment system using mobile money. Over 200 informal market traders are on the platform, with an average of 100 users visiting monthly. The Lab is now looking at how this platform can help improve and strengthen cross-border trading. They are exploring how “My Lumo” can be adapted by neighboring country Senegal.



A Jumia Food deliveryman departs to drop off an order to an online customer. Photo: UNDP Uganda

**Snapshot: Transforming
informal enterprises
through inclusive e-
commerce in Uganda**

In March 2020, when the first COVID-19 case was recorded in Uganda and the government took action via a nationwide lockdown, the [UNDP Uganda Accelerator Lab partnered with Jumia](#), a leading e-commerce

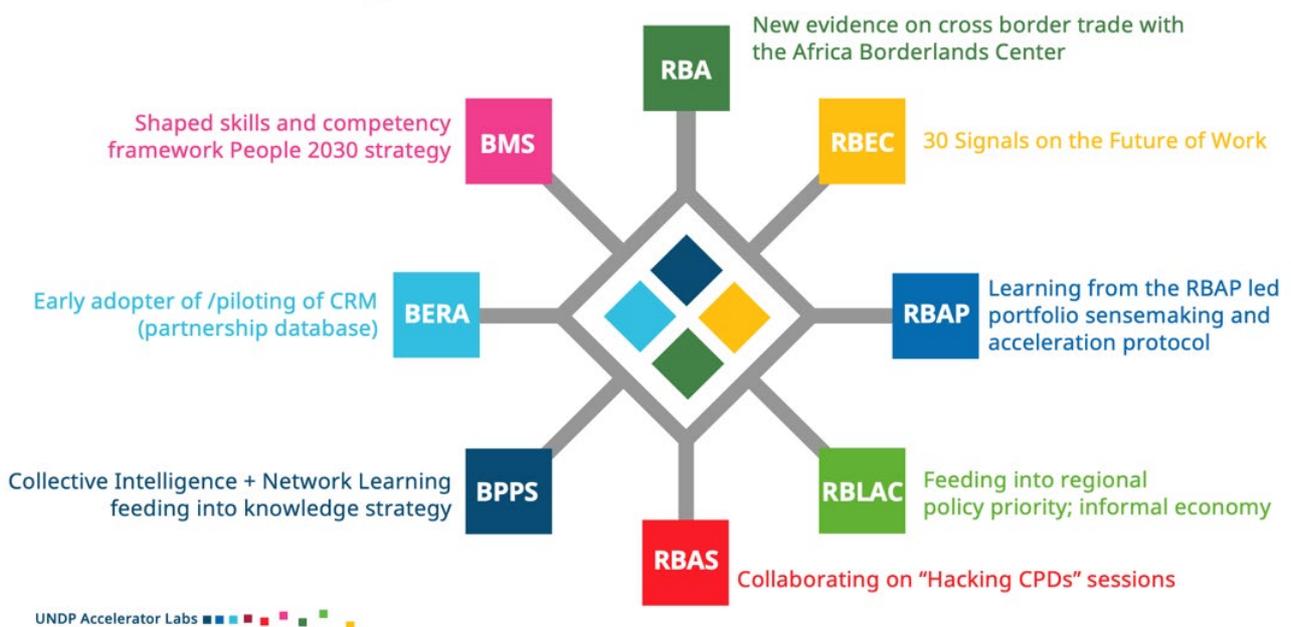
company, [to link the informal market vendors with their customers online](#).

So far, the Lab and Jumia have integrated over 2,000 market vendors into this e-commerce platform. A new product line, “Kikumi Kikumi,” was also launched within Jumia’s platform tailored to low-income earners to buy groceries at a low cost and make orders without a smartphone by calling in using a self-help menu on their feature phones. The Lab is now looking at pathways to scale this platform nationally and transform informal enterprises in Uganda through inclusive e-commerce.

3.3.3 The Network Effect: tapping into regional agendas to advance social innovation in sustainable development

As the Network of Labs matures, we begin to embed this practice into UNDP. 2021 saw traction with UNDP regional bureaus, responsible for UNDP Country Office oversight and delivery of regional development strategies. The Accelerator Labs embedded their ways of working into the newly formed Africa Borderlands Center, led by UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa, leveraging 1.8 million USD to create new insights on cross-border trade on the continent through the Accelerator Labs as part of a broader UNDP effort. This and other collaborations show how the future of development is being embedded throughout UNDP.

Acceleration for strategic ends



Learning from the informal sector in Latin America and the Caribbean

The UNDP Accelerator Labs in Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala and Paraguay are currently exploring informality across the region and using ethnography to learn about how to improve the lives of informal workers.

In the brief, "**Learning from innovation in LAC: Listening to the informal sector,**" led by the UNDP Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean, they ask frontier questions such as: how can we learn from creative solutions by those in the informal sector and how do we learn to see moving from informality to formality as an incremental and nonlinear process?

- ◇ [Download the brief to discover these insights from Latin America and the Caribbean](#)



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The Changing Nature of Work: 30 signals to consider for a sustainable future

It's on everyone's minds these days: how has the nature of work changed, and how will it affect us long-term? Taking a deep dive into the issues affecting our work life, balance and structure, six UNDP Accelerator Labs across Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States got together to report on 30 signals that herald these changes. In "The Changing Nature of Work," they used collective intelligence to shape the where, who, how, and why and to ask critical questions about the "new normal" in the workplace and present concrete recommendations to build a more equitable future for all types of workers, in the public, private and more informal "gig economy" sectors. The "future is already here," the regional report concludes. Rapid changes and signals of change can be seen in almost all job markets, work models and social protection mechanisms. Many trends were known even before the pandemic brought them home. To face an interconnected set of challenges, the report encourages a systematic approach and a portfolio of solutions, keeping humans at the center of transformation.

The report had a significant online outreach through the social media campaign [#30days30signals](#) and it was then picked up by international organizations such as the [World Economic Forum](#).

◇ **[Read the report.](#)**



3.4 Engaging with and influencing the broader development ecosystem: media coverage and communications update

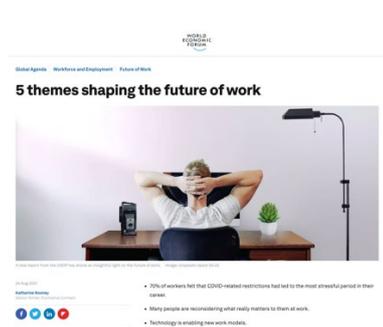
The Accelerator Lab Network’s global visibility is a critical component of the Network itself. Via targeted communication campaigns and media outreach we aim to disseminate our learning and recognize publicly our founding investors. With data-driven tactics that parallel the Labs’ innovative ways to work, our communication efforts are expanding to reach a larger audience, spread learning further and work on interconnected challenges together.

In 2021, the Accelerator Lab Network’s global audience grew annually by **52 percent** on Twitter and by **83 percent** on LinkedIn. Our social media channels have also generated **2.31M** in reach (a **584 percent** increase from last year).

These data points showcase the breadth of coverage which enables us to tap into global and local media opportunities, create new connections and relationships and strengthen our strategic communications approach.

2021 Media Coverage Selection

A snapshot of our top media coverage in 2021 linked to the UNDP Accelerator Labs Network:



World Economic Forum
24 August 2021
[5 themes shaping the future of work](#)



Devex
22 October 2021
[How tech can help global development tap into the power of the crowd](#)



BBC News
31 December 2021
[Cape Verde: Drone delivers medical supplies to remote islands](#)

A snapshot of the media coverage in 2021 linked to the expansion of the Accelerator Lab Network:



The Jakarta Post
27 March 2021
[Championing grassroots solutions: A breakthrough for SDGs](#)



Bangladesh Prothomalo
29 April 2021
[UNDP launches Accelerator Lab in Bangladesh to support SDGs](#)



Daily News Egypt
14 April 2021
[International Cooperation Minister witnesses UNDP Egypt accelerator lab launch](#)

A snapshot of the media coverage on Accelerator Labs' initiatives featured in local media:



Relief Web
20 April 2021
[Togo Authorities bet on digital tools to fight COVID-19 and protect the most vulnerable](#)



The New Indian Express
10 April 2021
[Spices Board signs MOU with UNDP India's Accelerator Lab](#)

A snapshot of the media coverage in international media focusing on our global learning and the scale of the Network:



Stanford Social Innovation Review
28 April 2021
[The Social Economy and the Fourth Industrial Revolution](#)



GovInsider
16 December 2021
[Meet the Women in GovTech 2021](#)
22 March 2021
[Meet the Women in UNDP: Special Innovation Report](#)



Sustainability Times
11 January 2021
[Accelerator Labs aim to reinvent development](#)

for Tomorrow: meet the changemakers and their solutions

With the [for Tomorrow](#) initiative, the UNDP Accelerator Labs and Hyundai Motor Company have partnered to bring local innovations to the forefront. After one year of activity, the platform features 72 solutions shared by grassroots innovators who have improved life in communities across 44 countries.

Some of these [inspiring solutions](#), such as Onah Angela Amaka's own solar-powered streetlights in Nigeria or Sonika Manandhar's micro-loan system for female bus drivers in Kathmandu, Nepal were featured in media outlets such as [Vogue Arabia](#), [TreeHugger](#), [Marie Claire UK](#) and [Media Post](#).



Onah Angela Amaka (left) and Sonika Manandhar (right) are designing solutions to address the needs of their local communities.

SDG Global Festival of Action

The fifth [SDG Global Festival of Action](#), powered by the UN SDG Action Campaign, was held in March 2021 to find new ways to inspire, mobilize and connect people and organizations to take action on the SDGs. It was joined by more than 24,000 people from around the world with a further 148,000 engagements on social media.



One of the highlights of the festival was the **Collective Intelligence Workshop** organized by the UNDP Accelerator Labs. It received the most registrations for a single session across the whole of the Festival programme with 1,517 participants registering via Zoom up until the day before the event! During a hands-on session, Accelerator Lab members from UNDP Ukraine, Viet Nam, Ghana and the Global Team shared tips and tools to co-design with the attendees -- local community leaders, social innovators, members of youth communities and students -- smarter solutions to tackle a growing issue around the world: the amount of waste which pollutes the air and ends up in the ocean.

- ◇ [Watch](#): Collective Intelligence for Sustainable Development: Getting Smarter Together

Innovating in Comms: Twitter Spaces

In the spirit of working out loud, the UNDP Accelerator Labs kickstarted a [series of audio conversations via Twitter Spaces](#) as an experiment to introduce new ways of communicating our learnings and new spaces for collaboration opportunities. The Labs are the first UNDP agency to host a Twitter Spaces event.

Through these conversations we've enabled our Labs and partners across the world to share their learnings and initiatives on topics such as [strengthening food systems](#) and [what going digital means for the informal sector](#). Twitter Spaces attracts listeners worldwide ranging from UNDP staff members, academia and research organizations, along with the public and private sector.

In addition, these conversations have also surfaced collaboration opportunities – a new outreach avenue for the Network. For example, from a Twitter Spaces conversation, the UNDP Global Centre for Technology, Innovation, and Sustainable Development team based in Singapore sought support from our Labs. They were looking to learn from them as they build a

data platform to support policymaking for sustainable agricultural food systems. Additionally, the food systems group of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute offered their team's expertise, support and resources for our Lab's food systems transformation initiatives. Lastly, a UNDP Resident Representative in Africa [reached out to our Labs in Uganda and The Gambia](#) to replicate and adapt the digital platform solutions they've developed for the informal sector.

We look forward to continuing our Twitter Spaces sessions in 2022 via [@UNDPAccLabs](#).





Chapter 4: Partnerships: The Core of our Network

Partnerships continue to sit at the core of the UNDP Accelerator Labs. Reflections collected across the Network in 2021 indicate that the Accelerator Labs are a catalyst for bringing new partners into UNDP.

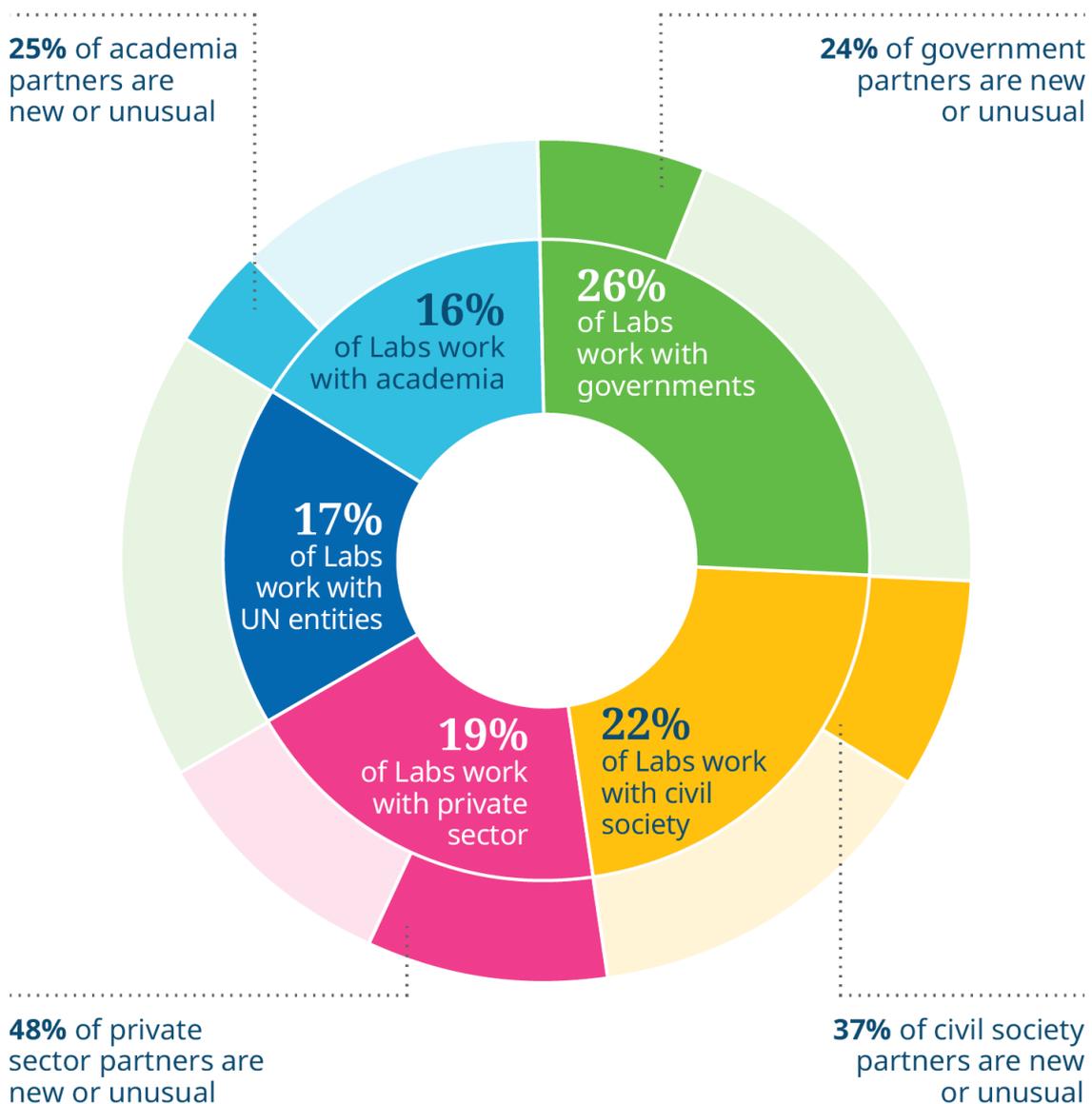
The UNDP Accelerator Labs “convene unusual suspects to gain a full system view on development problems,” according to the Midterm Evaluation. *Unusual* partners bring in new insights and help to broaden the conversation. *New* partners also play into the forms of data and innovation methods the Labs are using to boost knowledge of ecosystems and stakeholders. Through engaging with these actors, which create rich context and “wow” moments, the Labs are bringing disruption and learning into UNDP Country Offices.

“Bringing on board new and unusual partners is one of the key perceived added values of the Labs. It is not only about the partnerships but also about the importance of a more participatory bottom-up relationship and the possibility of tapping into new networks as part of coalitions for development action.”

–Midterm Evaluation 2021

As of February 2022, 88 percent of Labs are working with partners that are new to their Country Offices. These include start-ups offering data, tech or digital products and services (e.g., drone or satellite imaging companies), informal sector groups (e.g., vendor associations, women’s market collectives, waste pickers), innovation hubs, mobile phone operators and social enterprises. These new partners join a portfolio of more traditional partners including governments, aid agencies, NGOs, and academia.

Partners across the Network



Of 531 partners the Labs engaged with in 2021, **21 percent** were new to UNDP Country Offices. Of these, **26 percent** are government, **22 percent** civil society, **19 percent** private sector, **17 percent** other UN agencies and **16 percent** from academia.

While the Labs are working with new actors, they are also forging new forms of partnership in relationships that are bottom-up, networked and in unusual coalitions. Knowledge is flowing into UNDP, rather than primarily outward, and these partnerships are not strictly transactional.

In terms of impacts on UNDP as a whole, we see evidence that these new partnerships:

- Enable the Labs to act as “feet on the ground” for UNDP corporate strategies, such as digital transformation and structural priorities, namely the COVID-19 response.
- Drive UNDP’s capacity to credibly leverage use of valuable new data sources and support digital transformation in governments.
- Foster the Labs’ integration into UNDP. Somewhat counterintuitively, the Labs’ external partnerships demonstrate their value proposition and bolster their internal position.
- Indicate returns on investment in learning. By approaching wicked challenges with open minds and focusing on local innovations, the Accelerator Labs attract partners with their refreshing approach and solutions.
- Help position UNDP as the partner of choice and attract new funding schemes.

“The Labs are increasing the likelihood of successful implementation and scaling of solutions by working across a range of partnerships and prioritizing local actors and solutions.”

–Midterm Evaluation 2021



The UNDP Philippines Accelerator Lab brings corporations and fisherfolk to the table to tackle marine litter together.

Snapshot:

Convening the private sector and grassroots communities on common problems

The **UNDP Philippines Accelerator Lab** assisted the national government to bring together unusual actors to build a Multistakeholder Consultation on the National Plan of Action (NPOA) on Marine Litter. The Lab convened five global corporations, all new partners for the Country Office: Coca Cola, Nestle, Pepsi, Unilever and Proctor & Gamble. As the Lab reported, “there is much potential in partnering with the private sector to introduce prototype solutions in the market. The private sector has their own resources, the network, the expertise and manpower to multiply efforts.” In addition, the Lab made fisherfolk communities integral to discussions, which brought to life the devastation caused by marine litter. The Lab said, “this allows a deeper sense of empathy. Policy has to matter too to those on the ground.” As a result, the Department of the Environment in the Philippines is now institutionalizing a portfolio approach to combat marine litter. UNDP Philippines also established a new portfolio approach around these issues with their Climate Team.

The Japan SDG Innovation Challenge

In 2021 the UNDP Accelerator Labs Network continued working together with UNDP Japan Unit and the Japan Cabinet Office (JCO) in supporting its **Sustainable Development Goals Innovation Challenge**. The challenge was initiated to identify solutions to address local development problems and match solutions with Japanese companies in a new collaborative process. By doing this, the Japan SDGs Innovation Challenge is an important example of **connecting** the best available methodologies and techniques from the private innovation sector from a leading country in technology and innovation, to different local contexts in developing countries to accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

Seven UNDP Accelerator Labs (India, Vietnam, The Philippines, Turkey, Burkina Faso, Malaysia and South Africa) have been collaborating since the start of the challenge in 2020. Working with Japanese companies, they co-design models and test potential solutions to address

specific development challenges – from using blockchain for spices in India – to identifying plastic waste hotspots from satellite imagery in Viet Nam. The three selected countries of the second cohort, **Burkina Faso**, **South Africa** and **Malaysia** are currently working in the areas of food supply chains and disaster risk reduction-related solutions. A third cohort is planned to launch in 2022.



Snapshots from the SDG Innovation Challenge:

New corporate collaborations create a pathway to potential

The **UNDP India Accelerator Lab** partnered with NEC, a Japanese multinational IT company, to build a blockchain platform for the spices trade. The Lab brought the Indian government and GS1, a supply chain efficiency company, into the partnership to leverage these technologies in aid of the government's online portal for spice trading and quality assurance. As the Lab reported, "these partnerships enabled us to get the necessary buy-in from government. This experiment is highly valuable for UNDP, as an entirely new area of work with enormous future potential." Collaboration between these actors – all new to UNDP India – is enabling radical transformation of the industry in India, where spices exports earn \$3.6 billion annually. [Read more](#) about this work.



The **UNDP Viet Nam Accelerator Lab** is working with **JAMSS (Japan Manned Space System Corporation)** on a feasibility study using [remote sensing to identify plastic waste hotspots](#) from satellite imagery. This data can be used to build a business model suitable to Viet Nam's market that will help to properly manage waste.



The **UNDP Accelerator Lab in Turkey**, supported by the Japanese company **Sotonoba**, is focusing on developing a model to [transform underutilized public spaces](#) by including residents in the design process to share their visions, experiences and skills with the municipality and others who create public spaces.

The **UNDP Philippines Accelerator Lab** is also working with **JAMSS in a remote sensing model for marine litter** in the river systems of Metro Manila.



Through partnerships, the Labs advance a major corporate priority: the UNDP digital strategy. With a commitment to diversifying sources of data, the Labs are creating new partnerships with data ecosystem stakeholders such as web platforms and start-ups. For example, the Uganda Lab signed an MOU with Jumia, an online grocery shopping platform, to share data on consumer behavior and informal trading.

Tapping into new information sources, the Ukraine Lab partnered with the European Space Agency to access satellite data, and the India Lab signed an MOU with Nottingham University on sharing geospatial data – both to understand air quality.

“Being connected to unusual partners allowed UNDP, through the Lab, to have access to data they would otherwise not have had.”
– UNDP Namibia Accelerator Lab

Furthermore, a close *internal* partnership between the Labs and the UNDP Chief Digital Office (CDO) demonstrates how the Network provides an enabling environment for digital transformation. For instance, Accelerator Labs represented 30 percent of projects selected by the CDO as part of Digital X, which awards funding to scale country-level digital solutions.

“We have more real time data since we built a network of partners. We are privy to information that enables us to tweak our project to fit the situation on the ground.”
– UNDP Malawi Accelerator Lab

In addition, the CDO’s Digital Advocates Network is comprised of 30 percent Lab members, who support digital project design and delivery in country offices. Additionally, at the end of 2021, GIZ announced funding of a CDO data collaboration project, in which a selection of experienced Accelerator Labs will play a core role in the mapping and testing of a “good practices” toolkit for national and local data innovation and collaboration.

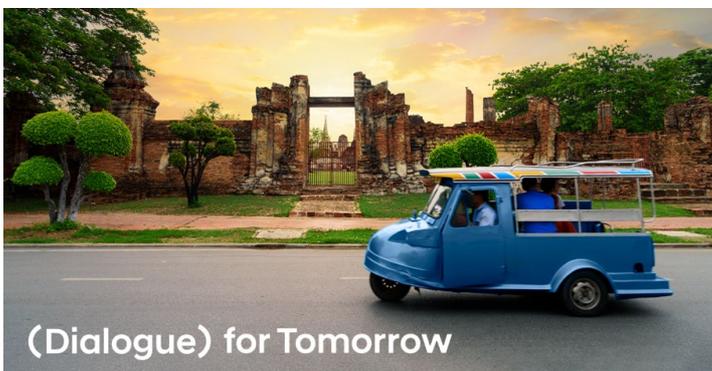
Digital partnerships



Ojeks, tuktuks, jeepneys, matatus, colectivos. These are all means of informal transportation and are a core part of urban mobility systems in the rapidly growing metropolitan regions of the Global South. These regionwide, privately provided transport modes emerge to meet the demand for cheap, flexible mobility. They move millions, employ hundreds of thousands and support the sizable informal sector in urban economies.

In June 2021, the [NewCities Foundation](#) and the UNDP Accelerator Labs signed a collaboration agreement to tap into the study and transformation of Informal Sector Transportation. The NewCities Foundation, a global non-profit based in Canada, aims to shape a better urban future. They have a track record to help the Accelerator Labs move forward our learning and policy recommendations on informal sector transportation. This new partner will bring the “whole-city” approach by convening and connecting key stakeholders of the urban ecosystem.

◇ [Read](#) the partnership press release



Snapshot: “(Dialogue) for Tomorrow” elevates the discussion on informal mobility and homegrown transport solutions

To celebrate the one-year anniversary of [for Tomorrow](#), the partnership between the UNDP Accelerator Labs and Hyundai Motor Company, we organized our first “Dialogue on Informal Transportation” on September 29, 2021. Paola Constantino, Head of Solutions Mapping at the UNDP Accelerator Lab in Guatemala

and Benjamin de la Peña, CEO, Shared-Use Mobility Center and Chair, NewCities’ Global Partnership for Informal Transportation, discussed the role of informal transportation in urban and rural areas which was then followed by a live Q&A.

◇ [Watch the replay](#)



The Accelerator Labs entered a new knowledge partnership this year with [AfriLabs](#), a leading network organization that supports the growth of the innovation and technology ecosystem in Africa. AfriLabs includes over 225 hubs in 47 countries. The partnership between two well-established networks in the African innovation ecosystem will focus on harnessing the knowledge of local innovators across the continent to close the gap towards SDGs by building capacity, identifying links between learning, policy, and practice to advance innovation. To kick-off the partnership, an event in Nigeria was convened to address advances in innovation policy in Nigeria and how it can best serve development, the sustainability of startups and structuring policies. A series of similar dialogues will be held throughout Africa in 2022.

◇ [Read](#) the partnership press release



Incubated at **TED**

The UNDP Accelerator Labs collaborated with the **Healthy Internet Project**, incubated at the US media organization **TED**. This partnership piloted a bold experiment in crowdsourced moderation of the world wide web. UNDP Accelerator Labs in Argentina, Togo, Kenya and Lebanon led the effort to engage their innovation ecosystems to test out an easy-to-use browser extension that helps anyone flag malicious content online. The UNDP Accelerator Labs helped to test this tool and the concept of crowdsourcing online moderation through a series of experiments and pilot programs in different Lab countries. The tool (available

with [Chrome](#) or [Firefox](#) extension) is now publicly available for anyone to download and use to flag online content.

◇ [Read](#) the partnership press release

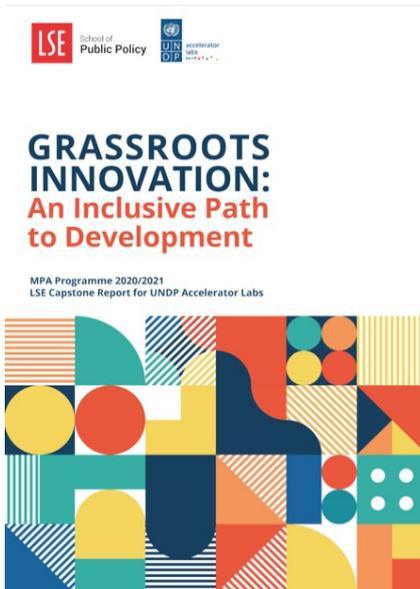
Snapshot:

UNDP Lebanon’s youth groups experiment with crowdsourcing a healthier internet

The **UNDP Lebanon Accelerator Lab** partnered with three youth communities to pilot the Healthy Internet Project (HIP) browser tool in three key areas: COVID-19 fake news, access to information law and Lebanese innovation. The youth groups’ pilot resulted in a more thorough understanding of how we can use crowdsourcing for a healthier internet. The project identified how to incentivize young people to engage in flagging content. It also highlighted the benefits, challenges and risks in the process of identifying and flagging harmful content through an open-source extension. This experimental work has informed UNDP’s programming on combatting misinformation and will be taken up by the Chief Digital Office for future scaling.

◇ [Read](#) about this pilot project.





Grassroots Innovation: An Inclusive Path to Development

The UNDP Accelerator Labs partnered with a group of Master of Public Administration candidates from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), to conduct research **on policies that promote grassroots innovation** for sustainable development.

They found that the importance and contributions of grassroots innovations have been neglected for several years, so the need for creating conducive environments through appropriate policies is pressing. Through the results of a series of surveys and interviews in eight countries with grassroots innovators and Accelerator Lab teams, this work produced a set of policy recommendations on grassroots innovations for national governments and local authorities. It is available publicly so that policymakers can use it to improve efforts to support local grassroots innovators and to design innovation policies.

- ◇ [Read the report](#): *Grassroots Innovation: An Inclusive Path to Development*



Chapter 5: A look ahead

“The UNDP Accelerator Lab Network is an ambitious experiment and is already a success. It is worth exploring how to establish the Labs as a permanent R&D function within UNDP Country Offices around the world, to ensure continuous exploration and experimentation related to evolving sustainable development challenges.”

- Midterm Evaluation 2021

Building on a growing track record of results in changing the way UNDP delivers, invests in and thinks about development, the UNDP Accelerator Labs create new forms of actionable insights to understand and solve 21st century development problems in 115 countries around the world, including most Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

With the Midterm Evaluation confirming the transformative impact of the Accelerator Labs, the way forward now is to focus on strategic options for embedding their way of working into UNDP and to ensure amplification of the current achievements with development and innovation partners.

In December 2021, the LAB of Labs (aka the executive-level project board) reviewed the results of the Midterm Evaluation. A general consensus emerged on the value add of the Accelerator Labs. Priority actions moving forward include steps to deepen the absorptive capacity of UNDP to adapt its work based on the results of experimentation and exploration. The Labs will directly contribute to the UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025 by undertaking research and development to make inroads into systems transformation to achieve the SDGs.

Many of the Labs have already been functioning as localized research and development units in the early stages of innovation cycles by doing experiments and eventually diffusing learnings to inform programming and mobilize wider ecosystems. In 2022, the Lab Network will deepen how it generates and scales learning in new and/or unknown areas that are critical to the achievement of the SDGs – the core function of R&D for UNDP.

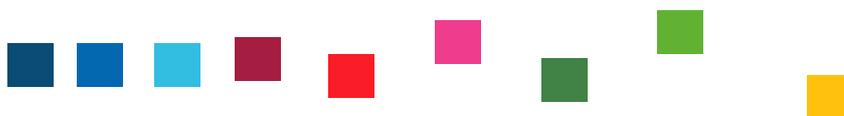
While a focus on embedding the ways of working of the Labs into UNDP will be primary in 2022, scaling opportunities beyond UNDP will also be a priority in order to create innumerable opportunities to amplify the insights created by the Labs. In 2022 we will test out ways to engage partners even more in exploring the data and insights produced by the Lab Network in order to allow for multiple partners to find patterns, create networks and scale learning that is accelerated by the UNDP Lab Network.

Key actions for 2022 include:

- Modelling options for embedding the learning from localized research and development into UNDP, including through UNDP regional bureaus and the Global Policy Network.
- Further development of the [network learning prototype](#) while embedding this work into UNDP and ILO with an R&D focus on informality.
- Testing a model for acceleration campaigns that mobilize the Lab Network and their partners to source grassroots innovations that contribute to global-scale sustainable development missions, e.g., the sustainable energy compact to connect 500 million more people to energy access by 2025.
- Advancing collective intelligence practice through data innovation investments and continuing to collaborate with UNDP's Chief Digital Office.
- Development of a case study on the Accelerator Labs for Harvard Business School.
- Promotion of a documentary on grassroots innovation for sustainable development through the Hyundai public private partnership.
- Continue developing innovative partnerships to drive research and development towards the acceleration of the SDGs, together with grassroots innovators, public-private partnerships, academia and UN agencies and programs.

- Contributing experiential evidence to efforts to improve how UNDP partners with private sector, universities and grassroots innovators.
- Continue supporting Country Offices to mainstream innovation and new capabilities for sustainable development in support of the core objectives of the UNDP Strategic Plan.

We are grateful for the bold and visionary support from our founding investors, Germany and Qatar, who have leveraged UNDP's investment in the Labs from the beginning. We look forward to continuing to co-create the future of the Labs with our partners.





accelerator labs

Co-building the Accelerator Labs as a joint venture with:



UNDP Core Partners

UNDP Core Partners



Action Partners



empowering experimentation

acceleratorlabs.undp.org

The UNDP Accelerator Labs are thankful to our founding investors: the Federal Republic of Germany and the Qatar Fund for Development. Additional support is provided by the Ministero dell’Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare. We are actively looking for more partners to enable the evolution of the UNDP Accelerator Lab network.