



SUMMARY REPORT

21-29 March 2022

Development in the Age of Change

From Tactical to Strategic Innovation

Strategic Innovation Clinic Series

Updated: 19 April 2022

#FutureSmartUNDP



Brief Overview

The Strategic Innovation Clinic Series 2022 consists of a **series of conversations and hands-on clinics organized by the UNDP Strategic Innovation Unit** with external experts and internal practitioners to activate the strategic innovation enabler of the new UNDP Strategic Plan 2022-2025.

The first round of conversations was organized between 21 and 29 March 2022 and brought together over 1,200 participants. It consisted of 1 opening panel discussion and 7 hands-on clinics with UNDP colleagues **exploring the practice of moving “from projects to portfolios”** and the lessons from Country Offices (COs) and regional and global programmes moving into the direction indicated by the new UNDP Strategic Plan.

Find below is an overview of the key takeaways for each session.

Read the [Concept Note](#) for the series.



Access the Content (21-29 March 2022)

Watch all the [session recordings](#) on YouTube.

Monday 21

- Why “Strategic” Innovation? – The Challenge of Transformation
- Ask Me Anything – So, What Exactly Do We Mean by “Projects to Portfolios”?

Tuesday 22

- How Do We Organize Ourselves for Scale?

Wednesday 23

- Building a Culture That Thinks Portfolios (Not Projects) First

Thursday 24

- Organizing your Office to Deliver on Portfolios
- Activating Accelerator Labs R&D for Portfolio Work

Monday 28

- Beyond Log frames – How Can We Build Agility and Learning in Our Work?

Tuesday 29

- Developing a Distinctive Value Proposition: Talking Portfolios to Donors and Governments

Explore the [Sessions Schedule](#) of events.

What's Next?

The Strategic Innovation Clinic Series will continue in May 2022 with at least three more exciting conversations:

- 1. Creating a Constituency Around Your Policy Priorities Through Deep Listening**
- 2. The Resource Mobilization System and Portfolio Finance**
- 3. Designing Portfolios in Crisis Contexts**

Stay tuned for more information at: <https://www.sparkblue.org/tacticaltostrategic>

Find all session recordings and materials: <https://bit.ly/innovclinics>

Any questions? Please contact: ida.uusikyla@undp.org



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Engagement Statistics

6 DAYS | 8 SESSIONS | 33 SPEAKERS | EXTERNAL & INTERNAL AUDIENCE

PARTICIPANTS: ZOOM IN

1,2K PARTICIPANTS IN 8 SESSIONS, INCL. 629 INDIVIDUAL PARTICIPANTS

152 AVERAGE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS PER SESSION

1,4K UNIQUE PAGEVIEWS ON SPARKBLUE, ON AVERAGE 5 MIN SPENT ON THE PAGE

COUNTRY ENGAGEMENT: ZOOM IN

110 COUNTRY OFFICES REPRESENTED

73% UNDP PARTICIPANTS WORKING AT COUNTRY LEVEL VS. 12% AT HQ LEVEL VS. 15% AT REGIONAL LEVEL

Participants located in all regions: Africa (37%), Latin America and the Caribbean (19%), Asia-Pacific (16%), Arab States (14.5%), and Europe and Central Asia (13.5%)

SPEAKERS: ZOOM IN

10% ARE EXTERNAL SPEAKERS, INCL. FROM THE UN, GOVERNMENTS, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

70% ARE FEMALE SPEAKERS

Speakers included UN Senior Managers, Policy Advisors, Accelerator Labs Heads, and a range experts on economic development, environment, gender, digitalization, and more!



Why "Strategic" Innovation? – The Challenge of Transformation (21 March 2022)



Moderator: Haoliang Xu, Assistant Administrator, UNDP

Speakers:

- Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator
- Sanjay Purohit, Chief Curator, Societal Platforms
- Nicole Kouassi, Resident Representative, UNDP Burundi
- Kirsten Dunlop, Chief Executive Officer, EIT Climate Knowledge and Innovation Community

Participants: 317

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key quotes:

1. "We are **not the institution that brings the solutions**, we are an institution that can be catalytic, that is a trusted partner, that can create spaces and that can connect people to global frontier of innovation and experimentation and opportunities to partner." – Achim Steiner
2. "We have introduced **the importance of thinking in terms of portfolios** (...) as very deliberately chosen and designed set of positions that are connected and designed for their relationships for the possibility of learning." – Kirsten Dunlop
3. "The pivotal question we were trying to answer was: **it is not about scale what works, it is what works at scale**. This inversion is very important because the real answer to what works at scale is: I don't know." – Sanjay Purohit

Ask Me Anything – So What Exactly Do We Mean by “Projects to Portfolios”? (21 March 2022)



Moderator: Giulio Quaggiotto, Head, Strategic Innovation Unit, UNDP

Speakers:

- Francine Pickup, Resident Representative, UNDP Serbia
- Jide Okeke, Regional Programme Coordinator, UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa
- Amanthi Wickramasinghe, M&E Specialist, UNDP Iraq

Participants: 125

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key takeaways:

1. We are learning that there is an **opportunity for UNDP to position itself as an ecosystem orchestrator** – it is more than just convening or bringing people together it is about creating an architecture to "attack" the issue.
2. What is emerging is that **the portfolio approach allows for more effective management, leveraging capacity, partnerships and monitoring across the portfolio** (instead of projects) reducing transaction costs. Attracting funding for the portfolios is the challenge ahead.
3. We often talk about the risks of doing but it is **important to acknowledge that there are substantial risks in "not" doing**. We should take into account the latter to change the way we design interventions from the beginning.
4. We often **spend a lot of time designing but not enough learning from what we are doing**. If we want to move to a different value proposition, we need to shift the balance towards more learning and reflection.

» How Do We Organize Ourselves for Scale? (22 March 2022)



Moderator: Milica Begovic, Innovation Advisor and Ida Uusikyla, Innovation Specialist, Strategic Innovation Unit, UNDP

Speakers:

- Dan Hill, Strategic Designer, Vinnova
- Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, Director, Nature, Climate and Energy Team, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, UNDP
- Blerta Aliko, Resident Representative of Algeria
- Anir Chowdhury, Policy Adviser of Government of Bangladesh and UNDP

Participants: 151

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key takeaways:

1. **There is a different path to scaling** which is not the "from one pilot to a unicorn" one, but instead gets us to scale based on aggregate and relational learning through sharing, co-creating and building movement over time with others.
2. To be able to answer to the Government's demands and **before scaling the approach through policy, the viability and sustainability of the business model needs to be proved** - expertise is needed to have ecosystem dialogues moving from participation to representation.
3. **We cannot engineer change at scale, but we can play around a number of levers that exist** – economic, political, social - that triggers the change that is needed over time. We must realize that whatever change we introduce we will trigger many things we didn't plan for. That is why it is fundamental to embrace the learning in what we do.



Building a Culture That Thinks Portfolios (Not Projects) First (23 March 2022)



Moderator: Jennifer Colville, Innovation Team Lead, UNDP Regional Hub in Amman

Speakers:

- Jaco Cilliers, Manager, Bangkok Regional Hub
- Luciana Mermet, Resident Representative, UNDP Bolivia
- Stan Nkwain, Director, UNDP Regional Service Center for Africa
- Mandeep Dhaliwal, Director, HIV, Health and Development Team, BPPS, UNDP
- Iina Paarma, Chief, Talent Development, Office of Human Resources, UNDP

Participants: 178

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key takeaways:

1. **There is an opportunity to have a different type of dialogue with the government** if we are able to reframe issues. This requires an investment in understanding issues from a different perspective, identify linkages and synergies across our projects.
2. **An interesting development is the creation of specific roles within UNDP with a focus on finding connections going beyond projects** (e.g., "portfolio curator"). This holds the potential of creating an environment and culture that enables a portfolio-based approach.
3. We are learning that critical to creating a culture that thinks in portfolios (rather than projects) is **a commonly developed and understood framing about the work which clearly articulates UNDPs value proposition and intent**. It is important to communicate about it 10 times more than we would.

Organizing Your Office to Deliver on Portfolios (24 March 2022)



Moderator: Lejla Sadiku, Head of Istanbul Regional Innovation Center, UNDP

Speakers:

- Margunn Indreboe, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP Botswana
- Maria Suokko, Resident Representative, UNDP Kosovo (UNSCR 1244)
- Laurel Patterson, Head, SDG Integration Team, Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP
- Randa Aboul-Hosn, Resident Representative, UNDP Jordan

Participants: 125

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key takeaways:

1. **What we are learning is that CPD design process can be an entry point to organize the office around portfolios**, new office set ups have been piloted in Botswana and Kosovo which requires staff to work beyond their projects and across the office.
2. **Learning and creating coherence across the office through portfolio sensemaking is a good way of starting to organize the office to deliver on portfolios as it** enables us to ultimately stay relevant in a rapidly changing development contexts.
3. **Engaging partners in the portfolio work and making the case for a shift to a new value proposition** can be challenging, but emerging examples indicate that this process can help enhance UNDP's positioning beyond delivery.

» Activating Accelerator Labs R&D for Portfolio Work (24 March 2022)



Moderator: Gina Lucarelli, Team Leader, Accelerator Lab Network and Bas Leurs, Lead Learning Designer, Accelerator Lab Network, UNDP

Speakers:

- Innocent Fred Ejolu, Partnerships, Innovation and Development Solutions Specialist & Accelerator Lab, Focal Point UNDP Uganda
- Hadijah Nabbale, Head of Solutions Mapping, UNDP Uganda
- Berna Mugema, Head of Experimentation, UNDP Uganda

Participants: 107

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key takeaways:

1. We are learning **different ways to combine the strategic - big transformations and moonshots and tactical - small actions and experiments.** Accelerator Labs are critical as they operate at the tactical level of innovation bringing R&D through exploration, experimentation and experiences from engaging with unusual suspects, to the strategy level.
2. In Uganda, **the Accelerator Lab brought together different, diverse partners in scaling the experiment** and bringing it to the broader strategy on deforestation and **played the role of a curator of the learning ecosystem.**
3. The **exploration and experimentation** that the Accelerator Labs do, **creates a new value propositions for the office.**

» Beyond Log Frames – How Can We Build Agility and Learning in Our Work? (28 March 2022)



Moderator: Søren Vester Haldrup,
Innovation Facility Manager Strategic
Innovation Unit, UNDP

Speakers:

- Ana Rosa Monteiro Soares, Chief Corporate and Thematic Evaluations, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP
- Faiza Effendi, Director, Effectiveness Group, BPPS, UNDP
- Chitose Noguchi, Deputy Special Representative, UNDP Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People
- Shigeki Komatsubara, Resident Representative, UNDP Malawi

Participants: 94

[Recording and session materials](#)

Key takeaways:

1. What is emerging is that we need to find ways of doing **M&E that both ensures accountability and promotes learning and adaptation**, while also shifting focus from measuring output-level progress towards aggregate and outcome level results across projects.
2. To learn from "doing", **we need to undertake regular reflection (sensemaking, create learning loops) and shift our thinking away from linear models of causality and change**, while also being open to acknowledge and document failures.
3. **Suggestions on doing RBM differently** included: Setting, refining and adding indicators; Going beyond strictly time-bound results; Outcome and output levels should be flexible with multiple pathways and quick learning loops; Monitoring for learning rather than results. These approaches are being tested in the M&E Sandbox.

» Developing a Distinctive Value Proposition: Talking Portfolios to Donors and Governments (29 March 2022)



Moderator: Alexandru Oprunenco, Head of Bangkok Regional Hub, a.i., UNDP

Speakers:

- Gülden Türköz-Cosslett, Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director, BERA, UNDP
- Agi Veres, Director, UNDP Office in Geneva
- Mansour Ndiaye, Global Head of Inclusive Growth, BPPS, UNDP
- Caitlin Wiesen, Resident Representative, UNDP Viet Nam
- Narue Paulilo Shiki, Corporate Strategy Advisor, Executive Office, UNDP

Key takeaways:

1. Donors want to see change and the **portfolio approach helps us position UNDP in a different space, which is in line with the new direction indicated by the new SP.** Not as a "solution provider" but an organisation that can work with complex challenges.
2. What we heard was that to increase internal coherence and create a compelling narrative around the work we do, **reframing challenges is a useful mechanism.** This requires a deliberate investment.
3. There is an opportunity for us to create a new value proposition for UNDP based on our **understanding and ability to coherently solve development challenges and bring together diverse set of partners.**

Participants: 124

[Recording and session materials](#)

How to Get Involved?

If you want to learn more about, contact our focal points:

- **Experiences on moving from projects to portfolios:** Giulio Quaggiotto
- **Experiences on scaling:** Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, Blerta Aliko, Anir Chowdhury
- **Experiences on embedding portfolio approaches in the Country Programme Document (CPD):** Margunn Indreboe, Randa Aboul-Hosn, Danakhan Malhas
- **Experiences with creating an office culture that thinks portfolios:** Jaco Cilliers, Maria Suokko, Luciana Mermet, Shigeki Komatsubara
- **Experiences on activating the Accelerator Lab for portfolio work:** Francine Pickup, Innocent Fred Ejolu
- **Experiences on engaging the Government for portfolios:** Francine Pickup, Nicole Kouassi, Shamiso Ruzvidzo
- **How to get involved in new forms of M&E that embrace adaptation and portfolio approaches:** Søren Vester Haldrup, Chitose Noguchi

Any questions? Please contact: ida.uusikyla@undp.org