



Zambia
accelerator
labs

Innovator Journey Pathway

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has created the fastest learning network on development solutions by identifying and scaling up local solutions that accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030. The Accelerator Lab (Acclab) initiative is reaching 115 countries to test and scale new solutions to global challenges. In Zambia the Acclab work has translated into broad reaching initiatives that systematically embed the Acclab Learning Cycle. Since 2020, the Acclab took a bold step by introducing 3 nationwide innovation initiatives, National Innovation Initiative (NII), The Experimentation Programme (EP) and the Waste Management and Youth Innovation Challenge (WMYIC) in collaboration with government, quasi government, academia, CSOs and innovators. Close to 3,000 submissions have been received over the past three years but only 120 have received support through an investment of USD 800,000. The Acclab has supported the innovators in the country with monetary, business development, mentorship, research and product development, oversight and access to networking platforms.

UNDP Acclab Impact on the Zambian Innovation Ecosystem

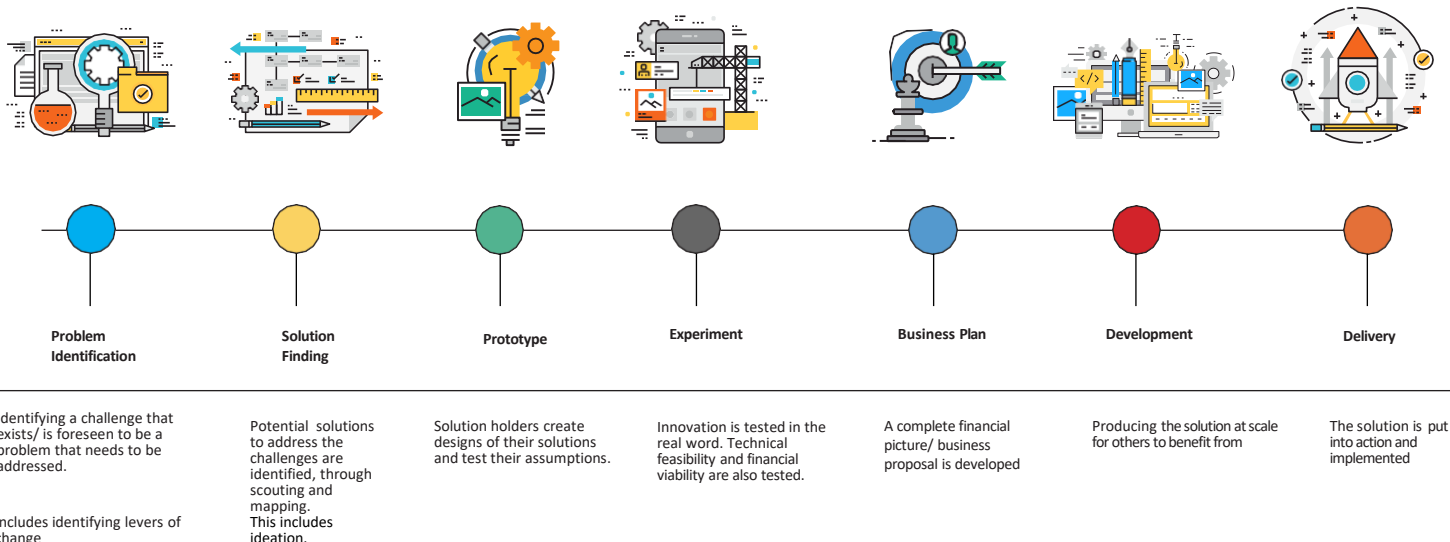
In 2022 UNDP commissioned a study to assess the outcomes of the innovation initiatives with participants drawn from across the country and to understand the general contribution of the initiatives to the innovation ecosystem. The study aimed to generate evidence and document lessons, identify gaps & unmet needs as well as design and map the Innovator's Journey.

Assessment Methodology

The assessment used mixed methods approach to explore diverse perspectives, uncover relationships that exist and provide stronger evidence. The assessment targeted 89 finalists of the 2020 and 2021 NII, 2020 WMYIC and 2021 EP. A total of 64 participants were successfully interviewed representing a response rate of 72%. Key informant interviews with identified actors in the Zambian Innovation eco-space were also conducted with innovation hubs, NII and Experimentation partners including the Ministry of Technology and Science and related government agencies.



Innovator's Pathway & Journey



Highlights from the evaluation

The Acclab supported initiatives have made a positive contribution to the innovation space:



78% of innovators supported by the Acclab initiatives have reported moving from at least one stage of development to the next with 46% reported having moved to business plan and delivery stages. Innovators that applied only once showed greater improvements than serial awardees.



There was low participation of women in the Innovation Initiatives (28%), the number of women led innovations reduce along the development stages with 33% reporting to be at business plan to delivery stages after participating the Innovation Initiatives.



Some challenges faced by innovators included not having industry experts to mentor them, lack of linkages to the industry and research institutions as well as bureaucracy with government institutions to get a license or registering a patent.



Innovators have cited an enhanced level of ownership in the codeveloped innovators journey at every level and strongly identified the need for government to create an enabling environment for the growth of innovations.

Next Steps for the Acclab

- The proposed innovator's journey provides a holistic understanding of the whole innovator's pathway and sequential steps to scale this can be used by Government and partners to map and coordinate the ecosystem and make necessary linkages.
- UNDP will enhance involvement in areas that need further attention i.e., Experiment, Business Plan, Development and Delivery
- Partnership building and coordination should be built amongst similar initiatives with a strong emphasis on private sector involvement to work with innovators at different stages.
- UNDP in collaboration with MoTs will explore the development of an online management information system that will be used to keep track of innovators across different initiatives, which could control individuals receiving multiple funding streams on the same innovation.
- The Acclab endeavors to continue leveraging the impact on innovation ecosystem to provide solutions to projects and facing **wicked challenges** with **unknown solutions**.



UNDP Zambia Accelerator Lab

<https://www.undp.org/acceleratorlabs/undp-zambia-accelerator-lab>

