

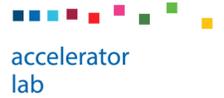
UNDP MALDIVES ACCELERATOR LAB

JOURNAL

2020 - MARCH 2022



Maldives

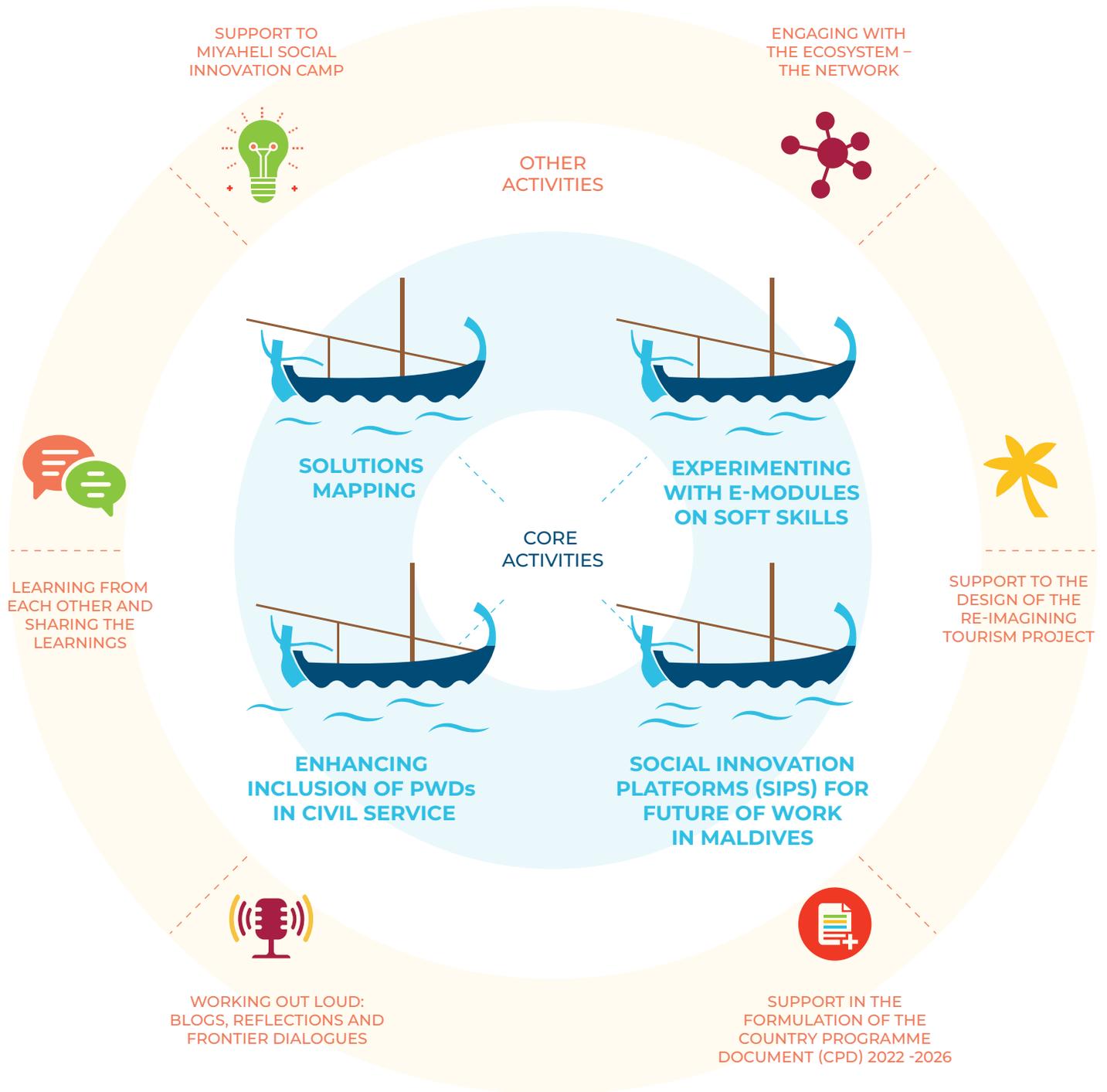


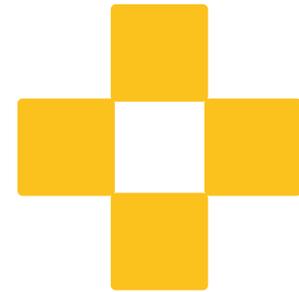
Co-building the Accelerator Labs as a joint venture with:



UNDP
Core
Partners

SNAPSHOT





UNDP ACCELERATOR LABS

REIMAGINING DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY!



Sense is about understanding what emerging challenges and opportunities in the local context are and determining where we need to focus our attention.

Explore is about better understanding the challenges and looking for solutions, particularly by looking at how citizens are already addressing these challenges and opportunities.

Test is about assembling a portfolio of potential solutions and continuously testing them until we are confident, they can work.

Grow is about handing over the portfolio of solutions, initiating new policy development or develop new relationships and new ways of doing things.

We live in a time of uncertainty, where the social and environmental challenges that we are called upon to address are changing every second.

Making progress, doing development work in such a context requires new ways of thinking about problems and solutions and new ways of collaborating and working together.

UNDP is at the very forefront of re-imagining development for the 21st century!

We are disrupting the way **we think, deliver, invest and manage** to continue finding ways to perform efficiently, better and at scale. This starts with an effort to inject innovation into the organization's DNA. UNDP Accelerator Labs are an important part of that effort.

The **Global Accelerator Lab network is UNDP's new service offering** that works with people, governments, private sector, and other partners **to create the next generation of development practitioners.**

The network consists of 91 labs across 115 countries.

Embedded in UNDP's country offices, the labs implement learning cycles to curate intelligence that could feed into the organisation's and the larger development ecosystem's work. This is done through the four key activities of sensing, exploring, testing and growing.





THE MALDIVES ACCELERATOR LAB

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

The UNDP Maldives Accelerator Lab was launched on March 13, 2021 at a virtual event bringing together actors from the government, private sector, civil society as well as youth and actors in the innovation ecosystem. The launch saw the participation of 86 participants on Zoom and reaching over 1200 individuals over Facebook from across the Maldives and the globe.

Supporting the metaphor of dhoni (boat) to describe the Maldives Accelerator Lab and the innovation journey – the virtual launch engaged a host of interesting and interactive elements and speakers to provide the public with more information about the lab and its way of working.

During the launch the Accelerator Lab also shared more information about its first learning cycle which

Welcome aboard #MageyLab!
We are on an exciting journey to solve the unique and complex development challenges of a small island state!

The Maldives Accelerator Lab (#MageyLab) is a space to:

- ✦ Bring national development ecosystem actors, including grassroots innovators, local and central government and private sector together;
- ✦ Identify and elevate the reach and impact of grassroots solutions and innovators.
- ✦ Co-design and test the next generation of public policies and development solutions in the country.

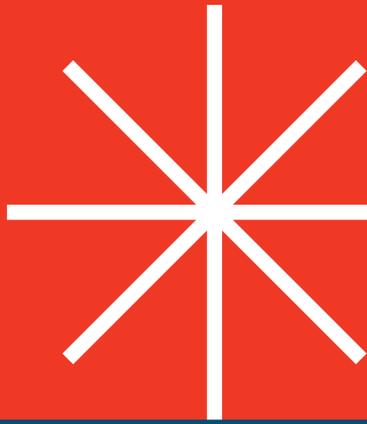
We are always looking for partners – individuals in government, civil society, local communities and private sector – who are passionate about creating lasting change for a better world.

If this is your calling, we should get in touch!

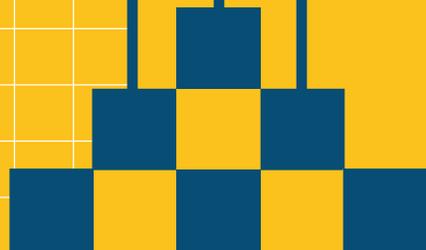
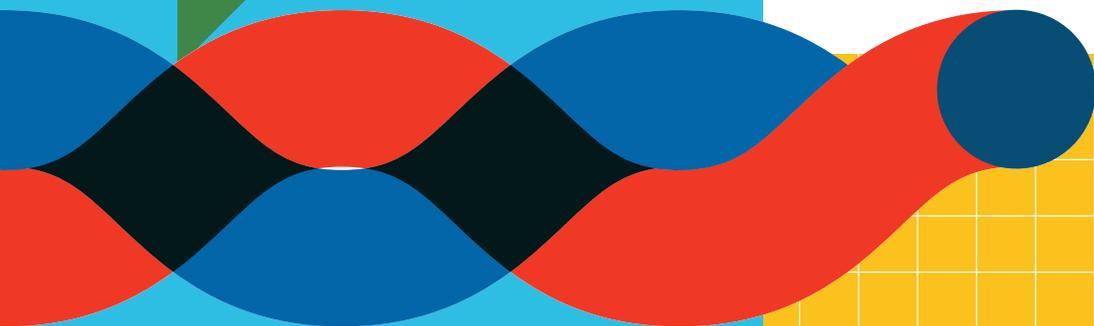
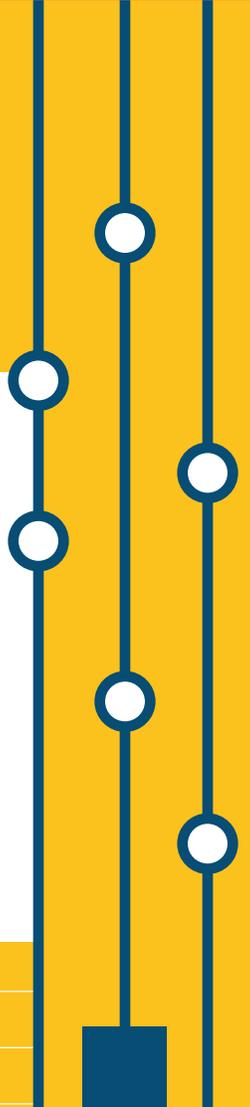
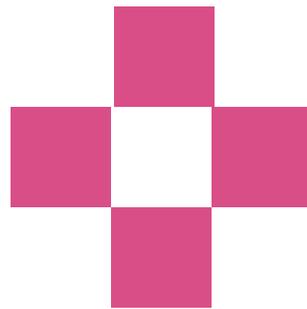
focuses on the issue of exclusions in the labour market.

Since the launch the Lab has continued to explore the barriers that prevent certain groups, including young people, women, persons with disabilities (PWDs) and other groups at risk of being left behind, from participating in the labor market, and had agreed to focus on this issue within the larger frame of Future of Work (FoW) as a strategic priority in consecutive learning cycles.

The Lab is applying ethnographic methodologies such as in-depth interviews, deep listening and user journey mapping to uncover leverage points that could be developed into sustainable pathways to ensure meaningful, productive and full employment for all.



BIG THINGS



MEMBERS - LEARNING CYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE



FATHMATH
SHADIYA



MUEES
MOOSA



PROF. HASSAN
UGAIL



RIFQA
SHIHAM



AMIN. NASHMY
FAZEEL



HUSSAIN
JINAN



SAUDHATH
AFEEF



HUSSAIN
AFEEF



FATHIMATH
IBRAHIM



FATH. ZAINY
SHAAFIU



VAIBHAV
GARG

1

LEARNING CYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LCAC)

The Learning Cycle Advisory Committee (LCAC) was set up with the aim of providing the Accelerator Lab with a sounding board and advisory support during the course of its learning cycles. The member composition allows for balanced and diverse perspectives, knowledge and expertise with members from different backgrounds representing various fields and institutions.

The LCAC has been a valuable resource group providing the lab feedback on the e-modules that are being developed for the first experiment. More details and profiles of the members can be found on the UNDP Maldives [website](#).

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2

SUPPORTING THE COUNTRY OFFICE STRATEGIZE ITS FOCUS FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

The Accelerator Lab supported the UNDP Maldives Country Office (CO) in the formulation of its next Country Program Document (CPD).

UNDP's CPD, formulated in partnership with national stakeholders, is the main document which guides and informs UNDP's work in the Maldives. The UNDP Country Programme 2016 – 2020 was extended till the end of 2021 and the same year UNDP engaged in a process to formulate its CPD for 2022 – 2026.

When we say we are supporting, we are really at the heart of it. It all started in December 2020, when Senior Management asked the Accelerator Lab to design a process that the CO could engage in to ensure that the CPD formulation was participatory, engaging, and innovative.

We embarked on an exciting process of collaborating with colleagues in the CO to design and execute an exciting process of making sense of what we have done and continue to do, the changing development landscape and more.

It began with a series of brown bag sessions, lots of exchanges over a mapping of our ongoing initiatives, a series of internal consultations with the entire staff at UNDP Maldives during the staff retreat on what UNDP should focus on in the next five years, a series of consultations with national stakeholders on the same question, visualizing a Theory of Change and then came the contributing to an initial draft and the restis history.

If you are interested in learning more about some of the things, we learnt through the consultations tap into [this episode of the Frontier Dialogues](#).



Photography by YUJUAN JING / UNDP MALDIVES

3 FIRST EXPERIMENT

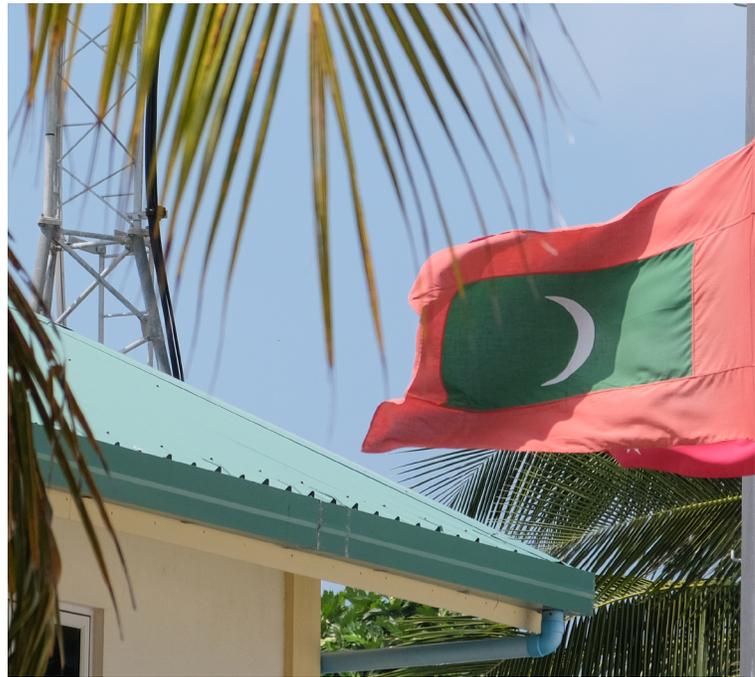
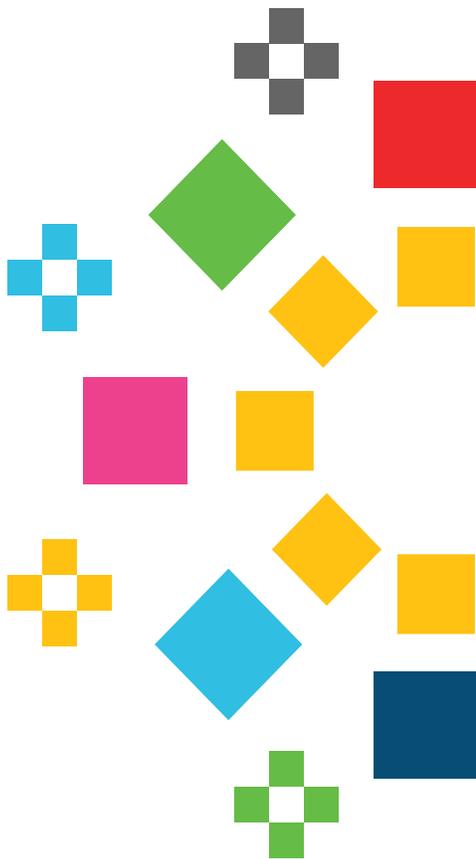


Photography by **ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES**

The first experiment of the UNDP Maldives Accelerator Lab is based on the learning question 'can improving soft skills help young people in securing and retaining employment?' With this question, we wanted to test whether online learning of soft skills would improve the possibility of securing and retaining employment. The concern of poor soft skills in the young working population, the importance of soft skills in enhancing one's employability coined with inadequate opportunities to acquire these skills recurred in our early explorations. The Assumptions will be tested with the help of data on different impact indicators that will be collected via the e-learning platform *Kiyeveni* where three e-modules on soft skills will be hosted.

Early on, during the designing of our first experiment we wanted to ensure that we adopt a human centered and participatory approach.

Accelerator Lab team designed and executed the participatory design session aimed at gauging the perspectives of 'potential users' of e-learning on soft skills. Accelerator Lab Maldives deeply felt the need to draw in user perspectives from individuals who may not be often involved in such a process. The central purpose of the participatory design session was to identify needs and expectations of potential users of e-modules and harness an informed understanding of user journeys in relation to online learning.



Photography by YUJUAN JING / UNDP MALDIVES

4 ENHANCING INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs) IN CIVIL SERVICE

As 2021 progressed, we explored further and deeper the exclusions of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the labor market. This led to a productive collaboration with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to support them in a policy under formulation, focusing on inclusion for PWDs in Civil Service employment.

As part of this process, CSC and Accelerator Lab engaged with different actors including PWDs, civil society organizations, government and private sector. We also conducted a Collective Intelligence Design workshop convening multiple stakeholders from different parts of the system. Additionally, during the lab field missions we conducted direct interviews to listen to civil service offices based in the islands to understand key factors for consideration to ensure successful policy implementation on the ground.

These processes generated novel insights on the issue, impacted stakeholders, existing solutions, and possible solutions. Furthermore, it validated and generated valuable feedback on the proposed policy.

The learnings from this will flow into the policy draft which is currently being reviewed by CSC. Also informed by the learnings, Accelerator lab is developing an experiment to test the recruitment pathways in the policy. A job readiness assessment tool for PWD's is developed and we look forward to test the use of this tool through the experiment.



Photography by ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

5 NEI'THA HALLEH?



UNDP Maldives Accelerator Lab engages in solutions mapping to provide visibility to local solutions and local innovators and to capture the lessons learnt and the experiences of these local solutions so that rather than trying to re-invent the wheel, we try to grow what has already worked. Mapping also provides us an opportunity to understand the nuances of the local innovation ecosystem and gain insights into what it would take to foster an environment in which local innovations and solutions could sprout and thrive!

In the year 2021, the Maldives Accelerator Lab conducted two solutions mapping exercises.

The first solutions mapping exercise, which was branded as a Solutions Safari was conducted between March and May and focused on mapping solutions to the broad category of sustainable development challenges. It was fully virtual, and solutions were solicited through an online call.

The second solutions mapping exercise, Nei'tha Halleh? focused on capturing local sustainable tourism solutions. This exercise was conducted over a period of two months between October and December. In addition to the online open call, the Accelerator Lab also undertook a field mission to Kaafu, Alifu Alifu and Alifu Dhaalu atolls to look for solutions.

We collated and presented the solutions in our very first edition of Ha'llu Foshi – A Catalogue of Local Solutions Mapped in the Maldives.

6

SOCIAL INNOVATION PLATFORMS (SIPs) FOR FUTURE OF WORK

The Accelerator Lab, with support of the SDG Integration Unit of the Bangkok Regional Hub is working with Agirre Lehendakaria Center (ALC) on establishing Social Innovation Platform (SIPs) for Future of Work (FoW) in Maldives. This would help us understand the complexity and systemic nature of this cross-cutting issue and inform the design of a portfolio of interventions which can be integrated into the country office program as well as our own learning cycles in the future. Within the 12 months of the process, we seek to set the foundations for a social and economic transformation by reaching an initial portfolio of options connected with the existing social dynamics operating in the selected location.

In 2021 we conducted systems mapping and a bottom up deep listening process collecting data from selected atolls across the country, centered broadly around the theme of Future of Work (FoW). We field tested the interview guides developed for the deep listening with Island level stakeholders from during our field mission to selected islands in November. The listening tool was revised based on this testing before handing over to a local consultancy firm to undertake the data collection.

The first iteration of listening collected over 215 interviews from twenty islands in the north (Haa Alifu, Shaviyani, Raa, Baa Atolls) , central (Lhaviyani Atoll) and south (Laamu, Gaafu Alifu, Gaafu Dhaalu Atolls and Fuahmulah City) regions. Interviewees include, local council members, WDC members, NGOs, PWDs, foreign and domestic workers, women and men in formal and informal sector, temporarily unemployed, recovering addicts, and people in further education/ training etc and individuals. We worked closely with the consultant, at times accompanying them on field field visits to ensure we involve the local voices, both the usual and unusual suspects in the deep listening process. The field listening process was enhanced by a digital listening exercise to analyze the digital spectrum of narratives amplifying the outreach.

With the first listening complete, we are in the process of analyzing the data with support of ALC and moving on to Collective Interpretation and Co-creation.



Photography by YUJUAN JING / UNDP MALDIVES

7 SUPPORT TO COUNTRY OFFICE (CO)

a. The Re-imagining Tourism Project

The Re-imagining Tourism project is a joint initiative between the Government and UNDP Maldives to explore, develop and test pathways for making tourism in the country more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable. It's built on the backbone of really asking – how can we ensure that tourism dividends are distributed more equitably to people and planet?

The Accelerator Lab took the lead in supporting the CO design this project and we supported the initial phases including the design and implementation of a project inception workshop.

This project re-invigorated the space for UNDP Maldives to play a key role in shaping the future of the country's tourism industry. The Accelerator Lab, along with other colleagues in the CO are also a part of a larger community of practice within UNDP that is trying to create and engage with new frames of conversation for creating systems transformation in the tourism space.

b. Miyaheli Social Innovation Camp

Miyaheli, a two-day youth social innovation camp for youth organized by the The Integrated Governance Programme (IGP) sees joint support across units. In its 4th run this year, Accelerator Lab was glad to be asked to support the camp. The lab facilitated sessions on Design Thinking for Social Innovation, which took participants from inspiration to ideation on their identified challenges. Head of Exploration from the lab participated in the camp for the two full days as a mentor, supporting the teams flesh out their ideas and prepare for the final pitch, while the other two Heads supported as on call mentors. As facilitators and mentors, it was rewarding to see these young innovators applying innovation tools and continuous learning to validate, iterate and refine their solutions.



Photography by ASHWA FAHEEM / UNDP MALDIVES

c. Annual Reporting, Communications and Gender SEAL

Accelerator Lab also supports other various CO activities in different capacities. Early in 2021, AccLab coordinated the Result Oriented Annual Reporting (ROAR) process. The Lab is also represented in the CO Gender Focal Team (GFT) supporting the CO Gender Seal process. We also support the CO communication's efforts for marking International Days relevant to our work like World Innovation and Creativity Day and World Youth Skills Day.



8 THE NETWORK-ENGAGING WITH THE ECOSYSTEM

Accelerator Lab continuously scans the development ecosystem and engages with them through different channels. This was a challenge given the lockdowns and COVID-19 restriction measures. Yet, it didn't stop us! The lab had virtual exploratory conversations with different actors in and out of Maldives to introduce, exchange and explore mutual interests. From these conversations, many unusual suspects and local innovators were discovered, expanding the Lab's network and develop an initial mapping of the national ecosystem.

As we narrowed down on our challenge and strategic priority, we had more focused conversations with different stakeholders, including government, civil society and private sector as well as individuals and local communities. The frontier dialogue podcast also provided another platform to reach out to many different actors. Following the first solutions mapping,

chat with solutionists and special Frontier Dialogue series with them again helped further penetrate these circles.

Investing in building relationships early on meant when we needed stakeholder input and participation in our different activities. This brings immense value to our work as it allows us to hear multiple narratives and see diverse perspectives.

Towards the end of the year, with the easing of the COVID-19 restrictions, the field missions were another opportunity to engage with different actors operating at the local level, again adding a rich layer of insights from the ground which we were lacking to some extent.

9

LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER



Despite these bigger bets and our support to CO on different interventions, we are also intentional about our learning journey. We availed various learning opportunities to develop our capacities and sharpen our tools –as well as added new ones to our toolbox!

The lab as a team participated in the *Action Learning Lab on Theory U for systems transformation* offered by SDG Integration. Head of Exploration from the lab participated in training on Horizon scanning in addition to working with RBAP Foresight network on the RBAP horizon scanning exercise. Our Solutions Mapper participated in the Tourism Stencil training organized by the Global Innovation Unit.

The lab also benefited from the rich learning exchanges that occur on the Accelerator Lab weekly global call, bi-weekly Heads calls as well as SIDS and RBAP Accelerator Lab network calls. In addition, all three Heads make time for individual learning interests like the Data Thursday series, UN Language learning courses and more.

As a learning network, sharing our learning is as much a priority

Following the working out loud principle, the lab shares about its work and learnings in written blogs shared widely ([Blog 1: "Why can't I get work?,"](#) [Blog 2: Cutting through Gen Z,](#) [Blog 3: Reflections on the Innovation Journey,](#) [Blog 4: A closing window of opportunity,](#) [Blog 5: One year of the Maldives Accelerator Lab](#)). We also take time to pen down bi-weekly reflections and to share them with the network.

Moreover, after the lab's field missions, we synthesized the insights gathered in an Intelligence Brief shared with the CO. Other on and off learning events occur through brownbag and learning sessions facilitated for colleagues, as part of the CO learning committee plans.

We welcome any thoughts on how best the lab can diffuse and amplify knowledge.



LOOKING AHEAD

We are excited to enter 2022 so to further refine our direction aiming at enhanced relevance and traction. Both from the management and the units, we collectively sense a revamped eagerness to carve out more strategic pathways for integrating the Accelerator Lab's work and its methodologies into the CO work. To ensure that WE, as a whole live up to the promise of being more anticipatory, agile and effective in delivering development results.

We are hoping that this refinement journey will be one fueled by radical honesty, playfulness, and collaboration and at best – a journey that continues for... Ever.



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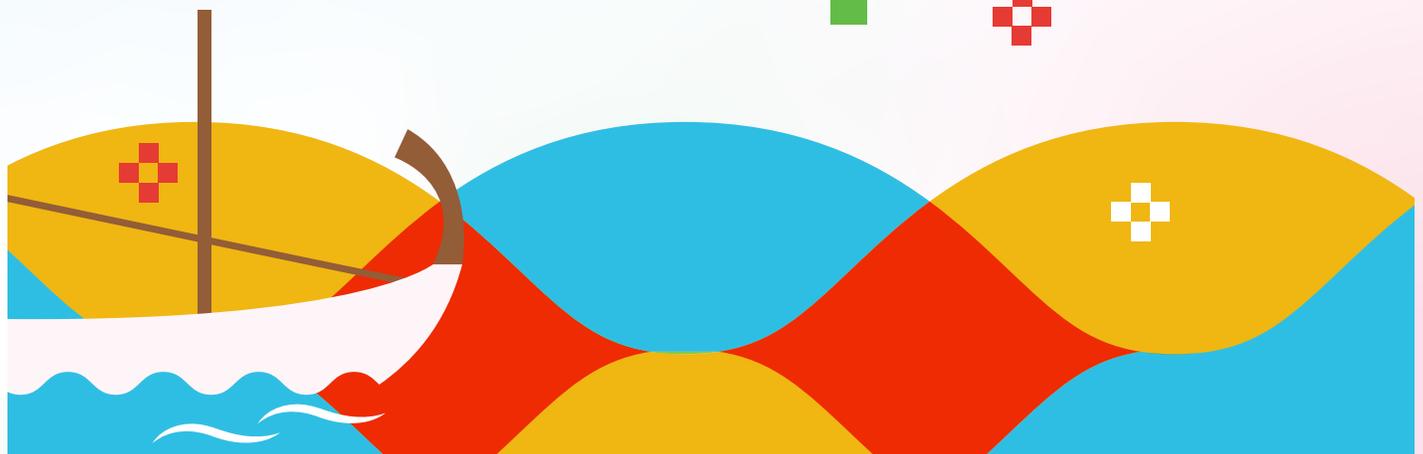


Maldives



The acquisition of knowledge always involves the revelation of ignorance - almost is the revelation of ignorance.

-Wendell Berry



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