# UNDP ACCELERATOR LABS



UNDP

*Empowered lives.*
*Resilient nations.*

german
**cooperation**
DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

**QATAR FUND**
**FOR DEVELOPMENT**
صندوق قطر للتنمية

**+ UNDP CORE PARTNERS**

# A NEW BREED
# OF CHALLENGES

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Migration, water scarcity, violent extremism, economic dislocations due to automation, diseases that spread more quickly due to increasing draughts. These are the types of real-world problems that undermine global development. They are problems that aren't simple to solve. They are compounded by billions of actions and interactions. They change by the minute. They are complex. They are interconnected.

These problems don't respond to well-laid economic growth and development plans. They don't respond to social mobilization alone. They can't be analysed with five -year-old datasets. And they won't be solved by a singular technological breakthrough.

The speed, dynamics, and complexity of today's challenges are fundamentally different from previous eras in history. A new breed of development challenges is emerging and, to date, the development system has not been able to address them effectively.

# ACCELERATOR LABS:
# AN EXPERIMENT AT SCALE

The UNDP Accelerator Labs are a new service offering that works with people, governments, and the private sector to reimagine development for the 21st century.

Through long-standing partnerships with national governments, we are creating a new capability for decision-makers to explore, experiment, and grow portfolios of mutually-reinforcing solutions to tackle complex challenges from multiple angles.

## THE WORLD'S FASTEST LEARNING NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The Accelerator Lab Network is made up of 60 teams in Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Labs will work on development challenges in parallel.

Together we will accelerate the speed at which we learn about what works and how to land solutions in local contexts. While traditional monitoring and evaluation methods might take two years or more to understand whether a solution is working, the Accelerator Labs can bring this time down to months or weeks.

## A GREATER BREADTH OF SOLUTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

The Labs combine deep local networks that allow our partners to elevate grassroots solutions as well as to source solutions globally from across the Lab network, our network partners, and UNDP.

## PORTFOLIOS FOR SYSTEMS IMPACT

We are designing portfolios with a full spectrum of regulatory, technological, behavioural, and participatory experiments to learn what combinations provide the right mix of solutions to systemic issues in development.

## CLOSER TO REAL-TIME DATA

New sources of data, such as high-precision maps based on satellite data together with ethnographic understanding will help inform the development of highly targeted initiatives.

But data are just the beginning. Decision making and collaboration are the end game. The Accelerator Labs will explore ways to incentivize high level decision-making based on these new sources of data. We will also test methods to channel people's insights, views and actions towards intractable development problems.

# HOW IT WORKS

### SENSE-MAKING:

Sense-making helps partners understand whether there is a fit between current investments and the changing environment. This is where learning effects can be accelerated: a move away from pilots towards genuine experiments in a portfolio logic.

### COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE:

The Labs will use the power of various sources of intelligence including the crowd, machine learning and distributed decision making to support partners to understand problems, develop new solutions, promote more inclusive decision making, and provide better oversight of what is done.
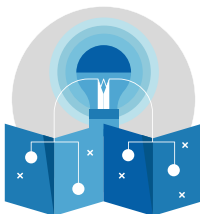
### SOLUTIONS MAPPING:

The Labs will identify local solutions that have the potential to accelerate development. Mapping grassroots innovation in 78 countries will provide an opportunity to test our hypotheses that when a problem is mutating rapidly, bottom up innovation is more relevant than innovation driven by a single start-up or central authority.
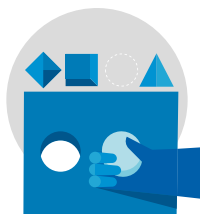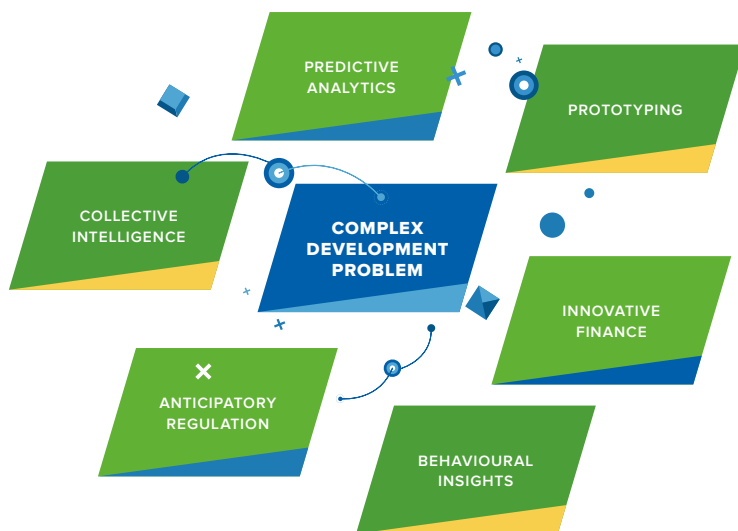
## PORTFOLIOS OF EXPERIMENTS:

The Labs will both deepen and widen the use of experimentation in the development sector.

Experimentation will help the network learn whether particular assumptions are accurate before deploying solutions at scale, especially in uncertain or volatile conditions that often dominate development progress.

A portfolio approach will focus on diversifying the learning generated from a range of types of experiments.

## A PORTFOLIO APPROACH TO EXPERIMENTATION

PREDICTIVE ANALYTICS

PROTOTYPING

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

COMPLEX DEVELOPMENT PROBLEM

INNOVATIVE FINANCE

ANTICIPATORY REGULATION

BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

# ACCELERATOR LABS CYCLE



**SENSE**

Looking
for patterns,
identifying
the relevance gap

**GROW**

Growing solutions

Scaling into UNDP

Private sector ventures

Policy change & government

handover

**EXPLORE**

Tap into uncommon
data sources and
inputs. Identifying
opportunities

**TEST**

Running experiments
to find out what works
and what doesn't

Designing a portfolio
of experiments

**NETWORK LEARNING**

# MARRYING SOCIAL INNOVATION TALENT WITH DEVELOPMENT EXPERTISE

To deliver on this offering, we're onboarding Accelerator Lab explorers, mappers and experimenters. They will marry UNDP's expertise in climate change, governance and poverty reduction with a new set of capabilities to tackle 21st century development challenges.

The network that we're building will have 180 engineers, designers, data scientists and ethnographers from over 60 countries. The Accelerator Lab network is onboarding:

- **60 Heads of Exploration** to continuously search for emerging, under-the-radar, and unintuitive solutions and mine new sources of data on development issues.

- **60 Heads of Solutions Mapping** to find local solutions that have emerged not just from hackathons in the capital, but also from people's ingenuity in remote regions of the country.

- **60 Heads of Experimentation** to develop and mature portfolios of tests to rapidly learn about what works, and what doesn't in addressing complex, fast-moving social and environmental issues.

## KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS

A goal this ambitious needs broad expertise for pooled capability. So far, the Accelerator Lab network is working with Nesta, MIT, the Honeybee Network, Lego's Lead User Lab and Axilo.

# EARLY TRACTION

We're already seeing partners demand a new kind of capability. Some examples:

### THE PHILIPPINES

Within a vibrant innovation ecosystem in the Philippines, more than 30 NGOs and labs are looking to the UNDP Accelerator Lab as a potential curator of knowledge and a convenor to bring people together to observe and learn from each other. The focus of this coalition will be to help 1 million families out of **poverty**.

### SERBIA

Serbia is among the world's ten **fastest shrinking populations** due to its low birth rates, high out-migration and low immigration. The President's Office has asked the Accelerator Lab to create actionable intelligence on this trend. The lab in Serbia will design and test a portfolio of experiments, focusing on circular migration and measures for retaining skilled and unskilled workers.

## ZIMBABWE

Amidst the post-Mugabe transition, the Zimbabwe Accelerator Lab will help create space to support sustained dialogue and constructive engagement between citizens and the government on key social, economic and governance reforms. At the request of the Office of the **President's Cabinet** and 22 ministries, the lab has already begun to use sense-making as a method to shift from expert-driven advice to experience-driven policies and to create a socialized understanding of the gap between the intent of reforms, their delivery, and a constantly changing environment.

# INNOVATION BACKED BY THE RELATIONSHIPS AND EXPERTISE OF UNDP

We're combining UNDP's development expertise with social innovation expertise.

UNDP has forged action-oriented partnerships with national governments, social development organizations and the private sector in **170 countries for more than fifty years**.

In 2019 alone, UNDP:

- Supported **15 countries to develop or implement strategies to prevent violent extremism**.

- Was the primary actor on climate change in the United Nations and during the last year we have helped **140 countries move closer to meeting their Paris Agreement pledges.**

- **Helped cut 256 million tons of carbon emissions**-which is equivalent to the footprint of 50 million cars in one year.

This is not the first introduction of innovation into UNDP. Since 2014, with the support of Denmark and others, UNDP has invested in over 140 experiments across programme countries to create prototypes and land new ways of working in programme design. The return on investment for seed funds in innovation in UNDP has been significant: every 1$ invested in innovation prototypes has generated 2$ in return.

# TOWARDS A 21ST CENTURY MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT

## TODAY

## TOMORROW
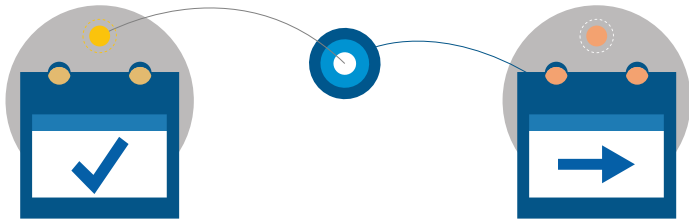
| TODAY | TOMORROW |
|---|---|
| DISCONNECTED PILOTS WITHOUT ADEQUATE LEARNING AND SCALING | FASTER LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIMENT-DRIVEN TESTING |
| PURSUING "UNICORNS" – INVESTING IN A SINGLE SOLUTION FOR COMPLEX PROBLEMS | PORTFOLIOS OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS ALLOW US TO CONSIDER MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS IN PARALLEL |
| BEST PRACTICES LAG BEHIND CHALLENGES THAT ARE CONSTANTLY SHIFTING | LEARNING FROM EXISTING, LOCAL SOLUTIONS THAT ARE CLOSER TO REALITY |
| DEVELOPMENT ACTORS WORKING IN ISOLATION "RELEARN" WHAT OTHER OFFICES HAVE ALREADY LEARNED | COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE THROUGH A GLOBALLY INTEGRATED NETWORK |
| LOOKING AT THE USUAL DATA SOURCES LEADS US TO THE USUAL ANSWERS | BRINGING IN NEW SOURCES OF DATA TO REAL-TIME EVOLVING CHALLENGES |

# ACCELERATOR LAB LOCATIONS



- **Algeria**
- **Angola**
- **Argentina**
- **Azerbaijan**
- **Barbados, covering 10 Caribbean countries**
- **Benin**
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**
- **Burkina Faso**
- **Cambodia**
- **Cape Verde**
- **Central African Republic**
- **Chad**
- **Colombia**
- **Congo**
- **Democratic Republic of Congo**
- **Dominican Republic**
- **Ecuador**
- **Eswatini**
- **Ethiopia**
- **Fiji, covering 10 countries in the Pacific**

- **Ghana**
- **India**
- **Iraq**
- **Jordan**
- **Kenya**
- **Lao PDR**
- **Lebanon**
- **Lesotho**
- **Libya**
- **Malawi**
- **Malaysia**
- **Mali**
- **Mexico**
- **Morocco**
- **Namibia**
- **Nepal**
- **Niger**
- **Pakistan**
- **Palestine**
- **Paraguay**

- **Philippines**
- **Rwanda**
- **Serbia**
- **Sierra Leone**
- **Somalia**
- **South Africa**
- **South Sudan**
- **Sudan**
- **Tanzania**
- **The Gambia**
- **Timor Leste**
- **Togo**
- **Tunisia**
- **Turkey**
- **Uganda**
- **Ukraine**
- **Uzbekistan**
- **Vietnam**
- **Zambia**
- **Zimbabwe**

# HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Join us!
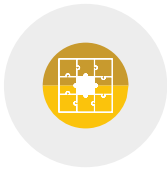
**Founding investors** will co-build the Accelerator Lab Network as a joint venture. Our founding investors are part of our Strategic Advisory Group together with high impact members with in-depth experience in social innovation. The group will help shape the direction of the Lab Network. They will benefit from the learning opportunities of the Labs, have real-time access to data, solutions and learning from the 60 Labs, and be an integral part of our identity.

**Partners** will include the Governments of the 78 countries the Network serves, as well as other investors. They will benefit from the emerging lessons of the Network and co-define the problems the labs address through experimentation.
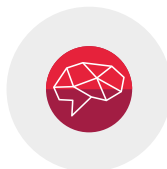
**Knowledge partners** are institutions with niche expertise and data relevant to the Accelerator Labs who will benefit from insight into emergent demand in this area.

**Action partners** are organisations, individuals and other actors who take part in the work of country Labs and the broader network.

## LET'S MAKE THIS HAPPEN

We're looking for partners to join us in investing and contributing knowledge to this global effort.

**For more information, please contact:**
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**Follow us:** @UNDPAccLabs

**Website:** acceleratorlabs.undp.org