



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

2014

Annual Review

UNDP Innovation Facility

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Launch of UNDP Haiti's LIDE project during the SHIFT Week of Innovation Action in September 2014. The project includes a roving innovation lab providing a space for unemployed youth to innovate and kick-start their micro-enterprises.

Foreword

UNDP established an **Innovation Team** with dedicated staff at HQ in New York and all five Regional Hubs. The Team is within the Development Impact Group of the Bureau for Programme and Policy Support. Learn more about our work at undp.org/innovation and connect to a larger network of experts on [Teamworks](#).

Follow [@UNDP_innovation](#) and join the [#inno4dev](#) conversation.

Have questions? Reach out to us at innovator.support@undp.org.

We first met the UNDP Innovation for Development team in our downtown Cairo hub. They had made the effort to come to us, not always a common trait in teams from very large organisations — especially ones that are aware of how bad Cairo traffic can be! It was refreshing to meet a team (of women, including Egyptians) that was as focused on innovation and impact as we are.

This wasn't a team trying to tick off indicators handed down by higher-ups, but a team driven to use innovation as a tool towards empowerment and change.

One of the first things I noticed was that they listened. They hadn't come to us with an agenda or yet another "innovation" toolkit and all the answers – instead they were interested in participating, in co-creating, in seeing how their resources and our partnership could achieve the change we both desired. Together we managed to run four fantastic (and extremely fun) events: "Spot the Future", "Make the Future", "Gamification for Development" and "Build a 3D printer". What surprised us was that they had the same vision – these were not events that should be run in silos, but opportunities to create local teams of practitioners – opportunities to exchange knowledge and build local content and capacity. Even more surprising was how the Innovation for Development team functioned: they were light, agile, flexible – yet connected to a very large organisation.

At [icecairo](#) we're used to working with international aid and large private and public sector organisations, many of which sport the same traits: slow, bureaucratic, and are often a bottle neck. We believe that many teams connected to similarly large organisations can learn a lot from the frictionless efficacy with which the UNDP Innovation Team functions. They reverse current trends by enabling and leveraging existing structures instead of trying to replicate them – empowering grassroots organisations and achieving far more impact than by

going it alone. These are approaches we would like to see in many of the other actors in Egypt's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Adam Molyneux-Berry
Co-founder [icecairo](#), Egypt – one of UNDP's new partners.



Executive Summary

The innovation facility has supported 49 initiatives across 54 countries:

- 15 of these are Least Developed Countries (LDCs)
- 8 are Small Island Developing States (SIDS)
- 16 in crisis affected and peace-building contexts, including 4 of 6 countries on the agenda of the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

In 2014 UNDP launched the Innovation Facility to support innovation to address development challenges. The Innovation Facility was made possible with the generous contribution of the Government of Denmark and co-investments from UNDP's core resources. The Innovation Facility is a funding mechanism managed by a small team of innovation experts at UNDP based in Addis Ababa, Amman, Bangkok, Istanbul, New York and Panama.

This review lays out why innovation is becoming increasingly important for international development and UNDP. It describes our approach to innovation as well as spotlights the initiatives funded by the Innovation Facility in 2014. UNDP has invested in new ways of doing business and over the past three years began strategically exploring innovation under the motto "innovation happens in practice." Through the Innovation Facility we strive to accelerate this approach by putting innovation in development solutions on a new trajectory.

Innovation for development promotes calculated risk-taking and heavily focuses on learning. The emphasis on 'working on out loud' – on sharing insights and asking for feedback while designing and implementing – is an important element of UNDP's approach to innovation.

The Innovation Facility provided innovation champions in UNDP Country Offices with the necessary means and corporate backing to test novel concepts and solutions to persisting development challenges, across 49 initiatives in 54 countries. Over 60% of the countries are developing or crisis-affected countries. In 2014, the Innovation Facility supported initiatives in:

- 8 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – Haiti, Maldives, Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, St. Kitts and Nevis and Tonga;
- 20 countries characterised as LDCs or LLDCs;

- 16 crisis-affected or peace-building situations, including 4 of 6 countries on the agenda of the UN Peace-building Commission and 13 situations on the agenda of the UN Security Council for 2014.

The initiatives funded by the Innovation Facility focused on three areas:

- Supporting citizen engagement through the development of responsive feedback mechanisms and pathways;
- Providing strategic foresight services to governments to strengthen the flexibility of national planning instruments;
- Establishing spaces to co-design solutions to social problems through innovation labs and camps for citizens, particularly the youth.

Grants from the Innovation Facility are a form of catalytic seed capital and so far have been deliberately small – between US\$40,000 and US\$160,000 per initiative. Grants were provided to a mix of initiatives linked to ongoing projects, programmes and new endeavours.

Highlights of key results in 2014 are:

- The uptake of strategic foresight as planning and dialogue instruments by the Governments of Rwanda and Tonga.
- The launch of a roving innovation lab in Haiti that provided young people from remote areas with support to create business plans. The outreach on social media of the initiative caught the attention of the Prime Minister's office which is interested in scaling up the concept if it proves successful and cost-effective.

Executive Summary

Continued.

In development, innovations need to add value to the end-user. They need to result in and trigger tangible changes for communities and countries.

- In Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, El Salvador, the Maldives, and Papa New Guinea, citizens' feedback is collected through mobile and online platforms, offering their respective governments further policy insights into issues important to local communities, such as traffic, infrastructure damage and corruption.
- In China, UNDP partnered with the private sector to develop a business model for e-waste recycling. Based on the analysis of big data, an app for customers was co-created with end-users. By the end of 2014 more than 100,000 people requested recycling services through the prototyped version of the app.
- To support innovation champions and provide colleagues and partners with tools, UNDP, together with [Nesta](#), a UK-based innovation fund, and other partners, created the [Development Impact and You toolkit](#) which offers a variety of tools to assist development practitioners in inventing, adopting and adapting ideas that can deliver better results.
- In Moldova, UNDP facilitated the re-design of police stations, embracing a human-centred approach that facilitated an open dialogue between citizens and the government.
- In Egypt, UNDP established a social innovation lab that provides partners, especially young people, with the space to generate ideas and prototypes. It serves as an incubator to test solutions on topics ranging from social justice, sexual harassment and people with disabilities to smart cities.

In total, the Innovation Facility funded 49 initiatives with 38 implemented by Country Offices and 11 implemented globally and regionally. This includes the global advocacy initiative for social innovation – SHIFT Week of Innovation Action – hosted by more than 20 Country Offices in September 2014.

The delivery rate is 96.6% of the total budget of US\$3.2 million, with US\$2.7 million contributed by the Government of Denmark and US\$500,000 co-invested from UNDP's Global Programme.

As most initiatives kicked-off in the middle of 2014, the full impact of the work will be assessed in 2015. UNDP is committed to closely monitoring the results of these early endeavours, with the intent to bring successful approaches to scale. A key tenet of innovation is that new ideas do not suffice. In the development field, innovations need to add value to the end-user. They need to result in and trigger tangible changes for communities and countries.

To advance the discourse on innovation for development, members of UNDP's Innovation Facility supported and participated in four international conferences in 2014.

At AidEx in Brussels, Jens Wandel (UN Assistant-Secretary-General, Director of UNDP's Bureau of Management and member of the Innovation Board) gave the Keynote Speech.

The Data Innovation for Policy Maker Conference in Indonesia was a collaboration with UN Global Pulse and Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning to advance the field of big data analysis for development as well as privacy and security concerns. This was instrumental to open a number of doors with private sector partners.

In October 2014, UNDP together with USAID, UN-Habitat and UN Global Pulse hosted the Asia Urban Futures Workshop to bring together the science and technology sectors, development community and progressive city planners to discuss the rising challenges and opportunities facing Asia as the result of rapid urbanisation and climate change.

At the end of October 2014, UNDP held the Asia-Pacific Regional Innovation Summit which convened over 90 development practitioners and leading innovators from 30 countries, donor agencies, governments, both partner and private organisations, and media partners. The summit took stock of and shared progress of initiatives supported by the Innovation Facility, while learning from successfully scaled up projects. It also provided exposure to new ideas and innovation concepts, and explored new opportunities for cross-sector collaboration

Executive Summary

Continued.

UNDP supported the following international conferences in 2014:

- [Asia-Pacific Regional Innovation Summit](#)
- [Asia Urban Futures Workshop](#)
- [Data Innovation for Policy Makers](#)

Innovation entails calculated risk-taking. Learning and adapting are key elements of our approach to innovation. Lessons from 2014 include:

- A greater emphasis on scaling is needed. This applies to innovation initiatives proposed by UNDP Country Offices and units. The Innovation Facility will work with Country Office teams to ensure the design of new initiatives incorporates clear scaling pathways from inception. In 2014, UNDP Asia-Pacific invested in a dedicated Scaling-Up Fund which is being reviewed in 2015. The insights of this model will serve as good practices for UNDP globally.
- Dedicated investments in scaling. While the inception of new ideas and funds for rapid prototyping and testing is an important elements in the field of innovation, we see that continuous (risk) investment in scaling is not yet sufficiently emphasised.
- A stronger focus on co-designing with rural, conflict-affected or vulnerable populations in hard-to-reach areas. In 2014 a number of initiatives were not designed to engage with the 'hardest to reach' users but with urban and comparatively well-educated segments of the population.

- An investment in changing rules and procedures to mainstream new processes. Several initiatives in 2014 embraced methods and processes that are not yet harmonised with UNDP's Policies and Operations Manual. For example, crowd-sourced challenges and 'Open Innovation' initiatives are not within the organisation's regulatory framework. To mainstream this practice a new policy was drafted and is being reviewed at UNDP for adoption in 2015.
- Only together with entrepreneurial partners and people affected by development challenges can we find the next generation of catalytic solutions to reach the targets of the Post-2015 agenda.

This report is also an invitation to work with us! Reach out and collaborate with us via innovator.support@undp.org or [@UNDP_innovation](https://twitter.com/UNDP_innovation) and join the [#inno4dev](https://twitter.com/UNDP_innovation) conversation on Twitter.

Why Innovation for Development?



Development challenges are increasingly complex. They are inter-connected and the pace of change, partially accelerated by information technologies, is unprecedented. Development organisations work in environments characterised by volatility, uncertainty and unpredictability. Traditional planning instruments are in many cases not able to respond to changes in the development environment and programming arrangements of development actors are often not agile enough to adapt adequately to new developments.

As these changes affect all countries across the globe, it becomes ever more important for UNDP, the UN System and development actors to respond to the changing landscape of development challenges with agile and flexible solutions, representing a shift away from business as usual. Over the past three years UNDP invested in strategically exploring innovation under the motto “innovation happens in practice”.

In 2014, the UNDP Innovation Facility supported initiatives in (left to right) Mongolia, Haiti and Moldova looking at the issues of waste management, youth entrepreneurship and public service provision, respectively.



UNDP's Emerging Innovation Framework

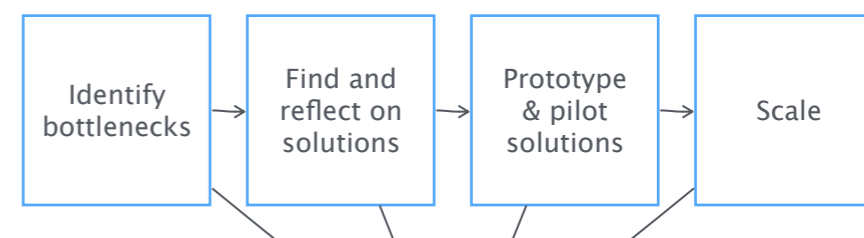
In 2013 UNDP made a deliberate and concerted effort to refine its approach to "innovation for development." A conceptual framework to guide our work has emerged, informed by practical collaborations with like-minded development practitioners and innovators — including Innovation Funds, Think Tanks, NGOs, as well as input and guidance of innovation champions across all levels of the organisation. The core principles underpinning this framework focus on the identification of bottlenecks, rapid testing of ideas through prototypes and pilots, scaling up what is proven to work, and "working out loud" at all times to benefit from the feedback of end-users, partners and stakeholders to shape action and impact.

Overall, UNDP's innovation work focuses on 'process' innovation, i.e. transforming UNDP's programming and introducing novel ways of doing business to the development landscape, together with partners. Technology is an accelerator of innovation but it is not the only driver of our work. Consulting stakeholders when designing a development initiative is not a new concept as it has long been a development practice. However, placing the people affected by development challenges – the end-users – at the heart of the process, engaging them in identifying the challenges and in co-creating solutions, is indeed new and our main driver.

Over the past few years innovation initiatives across the globe have tested novel concepts such as human

arrangements. This is a clear signal of UNDP's commitment to invest resources in innovation and to support innovation champions who challenge business as usual.

To drive this agenda, UNDP established an Innovation Team with dedicated staff at HQ in New York and all five Regional Hubs. There is also a vibrant Community of Practice on innovation for development. Established in 2012, the network brings together more than 500 innovation champions from Country Offices, Regional Hubs and HQ as well as UN agencies, innovation funds and academia to exchange experiences and lessons. A monthly newsletter provides updates on UNDP's work in innovation for development .



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