Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative

HOW UNITED NATIONS INNOVATION NETWORK MEMBERS APPROACH INNOVATION

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Valeria Carou-Jones Evaluation manager and chair of the evaluation reference group, Evaluation Adviser, Evaluation Office, UNFPA

UNFPA Evaluation Office

Jordi del Bas Team leader and evaluation specialist

Lucía Bárcena Social innovation junior expert

UNITED NATIONS INNOVATION NETWORK MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN THE COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
(In alphabetical order)

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UN AIDS)

Office of Information and Communications Technology (UN OICT)

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)

United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Global Pulse – Pulse Lab Jakarta

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA)

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

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Acronyms

OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OICT	Office of Information and Communications Technology
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNCT	United Nations Country Teams
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UN DOCO	United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIN	United Nations Innovation Network
WFP	World Food Programme

INTRODUCTION

> *We must not forget that the people we serve must always remain at the centre of everything we do. Innovation is one of the means through which we can achieve a greater impact in that mission"*
>
> *Ban Ki-Moon,*
> *United Nations former Secretary-General*

About the Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative

This report is part of the 'Formative Evaluation of the Innovation Initiative in UNFPA'.[1] The motivations for the evaluation included critically reflecting on lessons learned from the promotion of innovation since the 2014 creation of the UNFPA Innovation Fund, providing inputs for the next UNFPA Strategic Plan (2018–2021) and UNFPA strategies in the area of innovation, and improving the design, processes and systems of the Innovation Initiative.

The evaluation's purpose was to conduct an evidence-based, highly consultative and participative formative evaluation of the Innovation Initiative at UNFPA, including a mid-term evaluation of the Innovation Fund. To ensure independence, the Secretariat of the Innovation Fund entrusted evaluation management to the UNFPA Independent Evaluation Office. The Evaluation Office recruited a team of two external specialists to conduct the exercise.

The role of comparative analysis in the formative evaluation

The original design of the formative evaluation included a comparative analysis of approaches to innovation in United Nations agencies. This analysis was included in order to provide input on how other agencies design, implement, monitor and evaluate innovation, taking stock of their experiences. The main purpose of the comparative analysis was to provide input to the formative evaluation, contributing to the assessment and inspiring the way forward in UNFPA.

The scope of the formative evaluation encompassed three levels: the performance of the Innovation Fund, with a view to improve current performance; the links between the Innovation Fund and the Innovation Initiative; and the links between the Innovation Initiative and innovation in UNFPA as a whole. The results of the comparative analysis informed these three levels of analysis by offering comparative evidence of other agencies' experiences and approaches in a broad range of aspects (e.g. definition and scope of innovation, staff profiling and resourcing, management of innovation funds, governance mechanisms, approaches to innovation partnerships and how to learn from innovation).

About the methodology for the comparative analysis

The comparative analysis consisted of a systematic collection and comparison of data on a series of innovation features across 11 UN agencies and offices (including UNFPA), all of which are members of the United Nations Innovation Network (UNIN).

The collected data is presented in the UNIN Comparative Tables, annexed to this report. There is a table for each UNIN member participating in the assessment. Each table features a series of 10 areas of analysis and 45 items of study in total. The template of the UNIN comparative table was designed with substantial input from the Evaluation Reference Group and members of the Interdivisional Working Group on Innovation at UNFPA.

Relevant data to fill in the 11 tables was collected through two rounds of in-depth interviews, online searches, document reviews and a validation process with UNIN member staff. The validation process included accuracy checks and data gap filling.

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1   The final report is available at www.unfpa.org/admin-resource/formative-evaluation-unfpa-innovation-initiative

About what motivated this report

From the outset, the design of the formative evaluation established that the output of the comparative analysis would be presented in a way that would be useful for UNFPA and the other agencies contributing to the comparative analysis. The comparative study includes all raw data (the 11 UNIN comparative tables in annex 1) for all agencies that participated in the exercise.

This comparative study presents the topics considered to be of most interest within the context of the formative evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative. The same comparative tables would have resulted in a different comparative study report had the issues been prioritized differently; this comparative study is one of the many options offered by the comparative tables. The comparative tables could be updated from time to time and new comparative studies produced, reflecting the evolution of approaches to innovation among UNIN members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR INNOVATION

1. Innovation Scope and Purpose

The definitions and scope of innovation are very close to the organizations' mandates. Innovation is seen as an instrument to address pressing developmental challenges and to remain relevant as an organization. The scope of innovation varies from very specific areas to broad approaches that encompass all areas of the organization. Regardless of differences in definitions and scope, United Nations Innovation Network (UNIN) member agencies have a common understanding of how to approach innovation, as they adhere to the nine UN Principles of Innovation.

Definitions and scope

The definitions and scope of innovation respond to *why innovate*. In a February 2015 joint meeting, the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UN Women and WFP responded to this question by asserting that innovation was increasingly important to accelerating progress on the most pressing issues of the new development agenda.[2] Each organization's definition of innovation is not about theoretical definitions, but about what innovation means to the organization's mandate and to what the organization will use innovation for.

Defining and scoping innovation concerns key strategic decisions that determine not only how innovation is structured and managed in the organization, but also the shared understanding of what innovation is to that agency. The definition refers to the mission of innovation and the 'what for', whereas the scope refers to the focus of innovation within the organization. Scope identifies the range of innovation activities the organization will invest in and those that will be left out. This chapter presents an overview of the definitions and scope of innovation for the UNIN members analysed.

Definition of innovation

Overall, innovation is seen as a critical approach to institutional survival in a complex and changing world where a 'business as usual' approach is no longer suitable to address global challenges. Several consulted agencies see innovation as a way to remain relevant in the development sector. For example, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Strategic Plan 2014-2017 states: "to remain relevant, the humanitarian sector needs to identify new tools, products and services to respond to more complex operating environments and diversifying humanitarian needs."[3]

All UNIN members have specifically defined what innovation is to them and what innovation in their organizations is for. Some of these definitions are institutionally coined and publicly accessible; others are part of internal

reflective processes and have not yet been made public. Innovation definitions can be found in strategic plans, internal and external reports, concept notes, briefings and innovation websites.

Organizations with a clear institutional definition of what innovation is for usually feature definitions that connect directly to their mandate. For example, the World Food Programme (WFP) website states: "as the world changes, innovation is critical to enable the World Food Programme to meet global needs and to deliver on its mandate to end hunger." The UNICEF Innovation Narrative defines innovation as "something new or different that adds value. UNICEF innovates to accelerate results that reduce inequities for children." The UNDP innovation website defines innovation for development as being "about identifying more effective solutions that add value for the people affected by development

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2   Innovation in the UN, a session of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP (February 2015) www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Innovation-in-the-UN.09.2015-1.pdf

3   UN OCHA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 (Page 34) docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OCHA%20SF%202014-2017%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf

challenges — people and their governments, our users and clients." According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) innovation website, UNHCR "Innovates with and for refuges," and to this end "collaborates with UNHCR divisions, refugees, academia and the private sector to creatively address refugee challenges." In these definitions, the need to add value through innovative solutions to end-users is a common constituent of what innovation is for.

Some agencies feature definitions that generically respond to the 'why innovate' question (e.g. UNFPA and UN Women). As the UNFPA Innovation website explains, "UNFPA has embraced innovation to accelerate progress towards some of the most pressing issues we face, allowing us to continuously strive to deliver the best responses to the challenges at hand, and to remain adaptable, agile and responsive in a rapidly changing world." The UNFPA Innovation Concept Paper of September 2014 further states that "innovation is a generative and creative process that challenges the status quo and opens the pathway to discovery by embracing new ideas." The UN Women Briefing on Innovation to the Executive Board of September 2016 defines innovation as the "products, services, or processes that go beyond traditional approaches, challenge the status quo, add greater value and often – and ideally – are informed by human centred design. It also refers to changing the positioning of products or processes, and dominant paradigms." In this regard, a distinctive element of the UN Women and UNFPA definitions is that they incorporate the understanding that innovation challenges the status quo.

Rather than defining innovation, other UNIN members present innovation as part of their institutional DNA. This is the case in UN Global Pulse, the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (UN DOCO) and the United Nations Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT). UN Global Pulse, a flagship innovation initiative of the United Nations Secretary-General on big data, integrates innovation into its mission "to accelerate discovery, development and scaled adoption of big data innovation for sustainable development and humanitarian action." All of the initiatives the Pulse Labs in Jakarta and Kampala work on are, by definition, innovative in one way or another. Similarly, innovation is a core element of the institutional definition of UN DOCO. According to the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Functioning and Working Arrangements, UN DOCO "is the Secretariat and technical and advisory support unit of the UNDG. It brings together the UN development system to promote change and innovation to deliver together on sustainable development".[4] Similarly, the UN OICT innovation unit describes its central goal as facilitating "innovation across the United Nations Secretariat to find solutions to complex challenges by connecting UN staff to resources, ideas, external partners and each other."

UNAIDS, which does not explicitly define innovation, presents innovation as a cross-cutting element in its Agenda 2030 to end Aids. 'UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy: On the Fast-Track to End AIDS' mentions innovation as a central element of the agency's approach to changing business as usual practices and moving towards expanding services to better address people's needs, especially to populations with the highest HIV burdens.

Scope of innovation

The scope of innovation among UNIN member agencies ranges considerably, from very specific thematic and technical areas to very broad scoping that covers all organizational mandates and operational areas. UNICEF and WFP offer examples of very specific and clearly delineated scopes. In UNICEF, the focus is on technological solutions that reduce child inequalities. There is an explicit, particular focus on technology, with the Office of Innovation focusing on how to tap into innovative technologies to create solutions for vulnerable children. Innovation in WFP focuses on solutions to achieve zero hunger. The Innovation Accelerator plays a key role, systematically identifying promising ideas and potential solutions to help reach the global goal of Zero Hunger by 2030.

UNDP describes the scope of innovation in terms of its actual approach to innovate: "innovation focuses on the identification of bottlenecks, rapid testing of innovative solutions through prototypes, scaling up what is proven to work and, generally, 'working out loud' at all times to learn from user, partner and stakeholder feedback." Further, UNDP explicitly pinpoints two elements that determine what innovation is (and what it is not): adding value to the final user, making measurable progress to bring about real improvements, and the novel approach concept. UN OICT is also explicit in determining the boundaries of the scope to innovation. Assisting UN offices and departments in finding new ways to use existing and emerging technology to support their work is the focus; organizational change management and non-technological innovation are explicitly left out of the scope.

UNHCR and UN OCHA are examples of agencies with an innovation scope linked to the broad mandate of the organization. In UNHCR, the focus is on solutions that are designed for (and with) refugees and that address complex refugee challenges. UN OCHA focuses on products, processes and business models that generate improvements that can be brought to scale in the humanitarian sector.

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4   UN DOCO, the UNDG Secretariat, provides technical and advisory support to UNDG members.

UNFPA provides an example of a particularly broad scope in comparison to other UNIN agencies. Innovation in UNFPA covers all areas of the organization and includes creative solutions for improving programme delivery and operational efficiency; strengthening impacts and results in mandate areas; changing the organization's mindset, allowing for experimentation and creativity; improving supply chain management through technological innovation; and using big data to generate useful information for decision-making.

In UN DOCO and UN Women, the scope of innovation is linked to specific areas within their mandates. UN DOCO focuses on five innovation areas: data (including citizen-generated data, big data and open data); voices (featuring innovative ways for people to be more actively involved in decision-making); futures (innovating in overcoming cognitive biases when planning for sustainable futures); business innovations (including joint UN operations, particularly through data and technology); and finance (innovation beyond official development aid, e.g. disaster bonds, crowd-funding and peer-to-peer finance). UN Women focuses on prototyping and piloting innovations with a view to scaling them up in a number of thematic areas, such as ending violence

against women and women's economic empowerment. The focus of innovation in UN Women also covers promoting women innovators around world, expanding the market for innovations that advance women and ensuring a gender-response approach to the innovation cycle.

Scoping areas within a mandate may be very specific. For example, within Pulse Lab Jakarta's mandate to innovate in big data for sustainable development and humanitarian action, its innovation focus includes: mining public online content for proxy indicators of non-communicable disease risk factors; utilizing social media analysis techniques to understand attitudes toward immunization; analysing anonymous mobile phone data to monitor populations' mobility patterns before, during and after natural disasters; and analysing mobile phone data to estimate socioeconomic levels and map vulnerability indicators.

Irrespective of the definition adopted and the range of the scope chosen, UNIN member agencies have adhered to the nine UN Principles of Innovation. These principles act as a guiding framework for innovation work and reflect a common understanding on the approach to innovate across agencies (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The Nine Principles of Innovation

Design with the User   Understand the Existing Ecosystem   Design for Scale   Build for Sustainability   Be Data Driven

Use Open Source   Reuse and Improve   Do no harm   Be Collaborative

Source: www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/innovation/principles-of-innovation.html

2. Integrating Innovation into Strategic Planning

Innovation is a definitional element of the UN development system. Strategic planning instruments of all UNIN members incorporate innovation as an important element, either as a core element to deliver the strategic plan or as a key cross-cutting element (or both). What varies is the degree of integration, which may vary from recognizing the strategic importance of innovation to including innovation as an outcome in the strategic plan.

Innovation and strategic plans[5]

UNIN members, as with UN system organizations (including funds, specialized agencies and other entities), use a variety of strategic planning instruments.[6] Strategic plans, the most common instrument among the UNIN members analysed, present a vision of the what, why and how of the goals the agency wants to achieve. Further, strategic plans are linked to the optimization of resources and the promotion of programmatic synergies.[7] The extent to which innovation is integrated into strategic plans — and strategic planning in general — has important implications in terms of how innovation is prioritized, funded, reported and perceived across the organization and beyond (e.g. by donors). This section covers strategic plans for the period 2014-2017.[8]

Several agencies integrate innovation as a core element to deliver their strategic plan. In WFP, programme and operational innovation are mentioned among the critical requirements for the successful delivery of the strategic plan. Further, innovation is included in the plan as a means to improve implementation of national plans to achieve all Sustainable Development Goals (under strategic objective 4: support Sustainable Development Goal implementation). The UN DOCO strategy[9] proposes innovative partnerships and operative modalities as shorter-term initiatives to enable the UN development system to deliver on the post-2015 development agenda. Further, it refers to innovation as a constituent of the desired UN Development System. UN OCHA presents innovation as a line of work to advance towards their strategic vision. The strategic plan states: "OCHA will respond to the changes in the humanitarian sector by fostering a spirit of innovation."

Innovation is also incorporated as a means to enhance development impacts and organizational performance. The UNDP Strategic Plan relates innovation to scaling-up strategies to ensure better coverage and impact of development solutions. The UNFPA Strategic Plan recognizes innovation as a key element for UNFPA "to become a more adaptable, flexible, and nimble organization in order to have impact in a world that is increasingly complex and fast moving." Further, UNFPA includes innovation (together with partnerships and communication) in one of the outputs under organizational effectiveness and efficiency as a means to increase the organization's adaptability.

Including innovation as a cross-cutting element of the strategic plan is a common approach. In UNHCR, innovation approaches are inserted into actions subsumed under each strategic goal. Goals one and two, for example, include specific mentions of developing innovative approaches to close capacity gaps, and utilizing innovative formats and technologies to bring learning closer to learners. A distinct feature of the UNHCR approach is that strategic goal two makes it explicit that managers have a particular responsibility to foster a culture of innovation.

Some UNIN members include innovation both as a cross-cutting element and as a key constituent of the strategy. The UNAIDS response to HIV and AIDS features five core aspects: information, investment, inclusion, integration and innovation. Innovation as a core aspect to deliver the strategy focuses on access to HIV service delivery through technology, including mobile health, eHealth and tele-health. As an element, innovation cuts across the other four core aspects and includes collecting subnational data, increasing the availability of real-time data through new technologies, and innovations in research and science to produce better, optimized and long-lasting formulations of antiretroviral medicines and vaccines (or a cure). UN OICT, in charge of implementing the UN Information and Communication Technologies strategy, has a strong focus on innovation. Innovation is presented as a cross-cutting element and as one of the five pillars of the strategy ("foster innovative solutions that enable the UN to fulfil its mandates").

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5   Integrating innovation into strategic frameworks does not apply to Global Pulse for two reasons: because it does not use a strategic plan or integrated results frameworks, and because everything UN Global Pulse does is innovation. Therefore, the UN Global Pulse is not included in this section.

6   See paragraph 3 of 'Strategic Planning in the United Nations System'. Joint Inspection Unit. Geneva 2012. www.unjiu.org/en/reports-notes/jiu%20products/jiu_rep_2012_12_english.pdf

7   See paragraphs 18 and 41 of 'Strategic Planning in the United Nations System'.

8   This section includes strategic plans and other planning instruments for the period 2014-2017, given that at the time of data collection, most plans for the 2018-2021 period had not been finalized or were under development.

9   Embedded in the 'UNDG Vision and Framework for Actions for UN Operational Activities in support for the post-2015 Agenda'.

Some strategic plans go further and include innovation as an expected outcome or objective. Strategic objective 10 in the UN OCHA strategic plan is to promote innovation and bring it to scale in the humanitarian sector. Similarly, the UNICEF strategic plan states that UNICEF will support innovations with the potential to rapidly improve education outcomes for marginalized children (e.g. multilingual education, right-age enrolment, child-centred pedagogy and technology). Outcome 1 of the Delivering Together for Sustainable Development Facility at UN DOCO focuses completely on innovation: "UNDG utilizes proofs of concept tested at the country level to improve shared results and efficiency of operations to better support Sustainable Development Goal achievement."

Innovation is often closely associated with partnerships. UN DOCO proposes innovative partnerships as a shorter-term initiative to deliver on the post-2015 development agenda. UN Women's strategic plan calls for innovative partnerships with the private sector that "enable UN Women to leverage business supply chains, technology, innovation and philanthropic trends, and access goods and services and pooling of resources to advance women's empowerment and gender equality."

Similarly, the UNDP strategic plan integrates innovation as an element that is closely related to partnerships. The plan presents partnerships and catalytic funding that bring together communities, the private sector, foundations and civil society as a means to support subnational planning (connecting national priorities with actions on the ground).

UNICEF presents the highest degree of innovation embedment in a strategic plan; in it, innovation is an implementation modality. "Identification and promotion of innovation" is one of six implementation strategies the plan sets forth to achieve global and regional programme results.

Independent of how specific agencies incorporate innovation in their strategies, innovation is a definitional element, a constituent of the UN development system. The United Nations Development Group Strategic Priorities 2013-2016 refer to "a strong UN development system, one that is inclusive, coherent, innovative, guided by international norms and ready to help countries deliver on their sustainable development priorities and poverty eradication efforts."

3. Structuring Innovation in the Organization

The positions of innovation functions in organizational structures vary greatly across UNIN members; some report to executive directors, others operate without innovation units. Most agencies combine formal, centralized innovation units with less formalized (yet structured), decentralized innovation networks. Innovation team sizes vary across organizations; the more advanced innovation is in the agency, the larger the teams working on innovation are. Funding for innovation activities are usually non-core resources, coming mostly from donors and private-sector investors.

Structuring innovation in the organization

How innovation functions (e.g. units, teams) are structured within agencies relates to two aspects. First, to innovation units' position in organizational charts (which has implications in terms of how innovation is conceived, prioritized and led within the organization). Second, it relates to the size, format and arrangements of innovation units/teams (which has implications in terms of innovation performance). This chapter covers these topics and presents a succinct picture of where funds financing innovation activities come from.

The position of innovation functions in organizational structures

Not all UNIN members have innovation units. Of those that do, some units report to their executive director; others report to other divisions. Of those members that do not have innovation units, some feature innovation as a function cutting across all departments. In others, innovation is a function housed in one division or shared among several existing divisions/branches. As shown in Figure 2, four clusters emerge regarding the position of innovation within organizational structures.

Agencies that have a specific Innovation Unit or Office reporting directly to the Executive Director comprise the first cluster. This is the case in WFP, which features an Innovation and Change Management Division, headed by a D2 Director who reports to the Executive Director.[10] In UNICEF, there is an Office of Innovation that includes three groups: UNICEF Ventures (in New York Headquarters), UNICEF Futures (in San Francisco) and UNICEF Scale (the Global Innovation Centre operating from Bangkok and remotely). The heads of these three innovation groups and the Special Adviser on Innovation report directly to their respective executive director. Additionally, UNICEF features a small Supply Division

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10   A 'D2' position is a director-level position requiring more than 15 years of work experience. See www.unfpa.org/resources/united-nations-staff-categories

Innovation Unit that reports to the Director of the Supply Division. In UNHCR, the Innovation Unit is located in the High Commissioner Executive Office.

Innovation units linked to operational divisions that indirectly report to senior management make up the second cluster. In UNDP, the innovation unit is part of the Development Impact Group of the Bureau of Programme and Policy Support. The innovation unit at UN DOCO is embedded in the Knowledge and Innovation Team. In UN OICT, the innovation unit is located in the Global Services Division, which in turn reports to the UN Chief information Technology Office (UN CITO).

The third cluster includes agencies that feature innovation teams (rather than innovation units as such) as well as an innovation functions (often spread across different parts of the organization). In UNFPA, the Innovation Initiative, including the Innovation Fund, is hosted in the Technical Division. The Innovation Sponsor is the Director of the Technical Division and the innovation team coincides with the Secretariat of the Innovation Fund. Similar to UNFPA, UN Women has an innovation team linked to an Innovation Facility. In UN Women, the Innovation Facility is under the Policy and Programmes Bureau, with the objective of mainstreaming innovation throughout the organization. In UNAIDS, the innovation function is spread across teams in three business

units: the Programme Branch (which runs the Fast-Track agenda),[11] the Management and Governance Branch (which leads the Technology and Innovation Department), and the Executive Office (which leads the Lab Initiative).

The fourth cluster consists of agencies where innovation is a function cutting across the organizational structure. This is clearly the case in Global Pulse Labs, which have an innovation function that cuts across the entire organizational structure. This is because big data innovation permeates everything the labs work on. UN OCHA does not have an innovation unit or team; innovation is a horizontal issue across operational branches, with each branch working on innovative solutions within their specific areas of work.

The structure of innovation teams

UNIN members combine two types of structures: Formal innovation units/teams (usually centralized) and less– formalized, yet structured (and usually decentralized), innovation networks. The composition of formal innovation teams in most UNIN members consists of dedicated staff with innovation functions and responsibilities. Of the 11 organizations analyzed, eight have innovation units,[12] UN Women and UNFPA have innovation teams linked to innovation facilities/funds and UN OCHA and UNAIDS do not have specific staff dedicated to innovation.

In general, agencies with more developed innovation systems tend to have larger, dedicated teams working on innovation. This is the case in UNHCR, UNICEF, UNDP and WFP. UNHCR, for example, has 15 innovation staff; the WFP Innovation Accelerator has between 15 to 20 full-time staff; in UNICEF, at least 16 full-time staff plus dedicated external consultants work on innovation; and UNDP relies on full-time dedicated innovation staff at headquarters and in the five regional hubs. The UN OICT Innovation Unit (launched in May 2016) has three full-time staff working on innovation.

The innovation team at the UNFPA Innovation Secretariat consists of three staff members (including one full-time member dedicated to innovation). The innovation team within the Innovation Facility in UN Women has four staff members.

UNAIDS has no dedicated unit or team working full-time on innovation; innovation is about implementing the Fast-Track agenda, which involves the entire organization. UN OCHA is also a particular case. Innovation started in 2012 as a distinct portfolio to support the positioning of innovation in the humanitarian system in general. Two full-time staff worked on this, delivering outputs throughout the 2013-2015 period.[13] The team was subsequently dismantled and innovation was incorporated as an issue cutting across all branches.

Figure 2: The Different Positions of the Innovation Function

① **UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP** report directly to the Executive Director.

② **UNDP, UN DOCO, UN OICT** have an innovation unit that reports to a specific division.

③ **UNAIDS, UN Women and UNFPA** have innovation teams rather than innovation units.

④ **In UN Global Pulse and UN OCHA** innovation is a function cutting across the organizational structure.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the comparative tables.

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11   'Fast-Track' is an agenda to accelerate action to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030. The agenda uses innovation to expand services to better address people's needs and perspectives and focuses on the locations and populations with the highest HIV burdens.

12   Global Pulse Labs (including Pulse Lab Jakarta) are innovation labs and may be considered innovation units in themselves.

13   One of the main outputs was a state-of-the-art report on innovation in the humanitarian sector, available at: www.unocha.org/publication/policy-briefs-studies/humanitarian-innovation-state-art.

Tending to be more informal than innovation units, innovation networks may be serendipitous or goal-oriented (which may include knowledge-sharing platforms). Networks seem to make a difference when it comes to facilitating the rapid flow of ideas across an organization; a key aspect to innovation.

Figure 3. How Many Staff Work Exclusively on Innovation?

Embedded in the organization   **0**   **1-4**   **>9**

UN DOCO and UN Global Pulse   **UNAIDS and UN OCHA**   **UN OICT, UN Women and UNFPA**   **UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP**
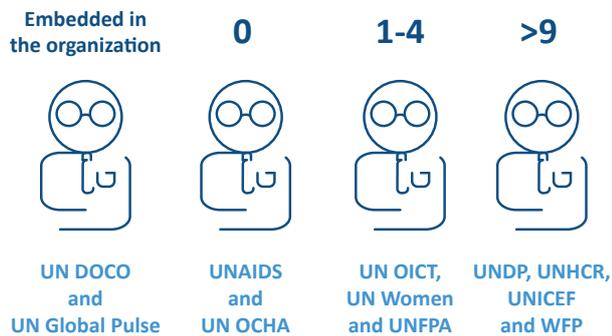
Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the comparative tables.

The majority of UNIN members make use of internal global and regional innovation networks, applying a hybrid approach: they combine full-time dedicated innovation staff with networks of innovation champions/ambassadors (volunteer staff).[14] In UNICEF, internal innovation networks play an important role in conducting portfolio reviews to identify ideas with potential. These ideas may then be pushed through the formal process of applying for seed funding. Similarly, in UNDP, internal innovation networks conduct portfolio scanning by identifying new approaches and sharing them with other offices through knowledge management services. UNDP innovation networks also conduct horizon scanning (looking and reaching out for what is new and unusual outside the organization).

The UNFPA East and Southern Africa innovation network brings together innovation champions from country offices. The network has a full-time coordinator, and has started to play an increasing role in structuring regional and global collaborations. UN Women has a network of innovation champions that are responsible for prototyping ideas (at the country, regional and headquarter-levels). WFP relies on a network of local innovation hubs at the regional and country office levels. UNHCR staff that graduate from the Fellowship Programme join the organization's network of innovation champions.

The organization-wide, simultaneously top-down and bottom-up enabling frame for innovation adopted by UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP seems to have worked particularly well. In these agencies, innovation units report directly to their executive director, reflecting the high priority given to innovation (top-down push for innovation). At the same time, innovation initiatives often generate at the country level, with innovative solutions expanding through regional and global networks (communities of practice that constitute a bottom-up push for innovation).

A common feature across UNIN members is that few agencies use innovation experts. Innovation is seen either as an attitude or as a skill (resulting from practical experience) in technical people. Rather than people specialized in innovation, Pulse Lab Jakarta has a number of in-house specialists in technical areas dedicated to developing innovative solutions. In UNFPA, innovation is seen as a staff mindset rather than as a technical skill. Similarly, in UNICEF innovation is not perceived as a job description or a job post but rather as an attitude of technical specialists (e.g. scientists and specialists in blockchain, artificial intelligence, drones and communication software technologies). In UNDP, Innovation Facility staff and innovation champions feature thematic expertise (governance, environment, gender, capacity building) and have developed dedicated innovation skills over the years by hands-on learning. These innovation skills are related to identifying, prototyping and scaling new approaches and solutions. UNDP and UNICEF are moving towards incorporating innovation as a core staff competency (see Chapter 9, Nurturing a Culture of Innovation). In the WFP Innovation Accelerator, there are a few staff members with specific innovation expertise, with most having thematic and sector-related expertise combined with experience in innovation projects.

DID YOU KNOW THAT…?

UNICEF has a global network of around 400 people in different parts of the world who have the mission to identify and drive innovation at the country, regional office and headquarters levels. In addition, UNICEF country offices support a network of 13 Innovation Labs that look for innovative solutions and trends at the community level. The Innovation Labs also function as incubators of ideas, bringing together youth, academia and the private and public sectors.

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14   Paid staff taking time out of their assigned responsibilities and devoting it to innovation activities.

The main funding sources for innovation

In most cases, funds for innovation activities come from external, non-core resources (mostly donors and private-sector investors) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Main Sources of Funding for Innovation by UNIN Member

Agencies	Main funding source
UNAIDS	The Fast-Track agenda is supported by core funds. Through the Leveraging Innovations and Financing for Ending AIDS Initiative, UNAIDS leverages funds to invest in interventions that are innovation focused. The investment approach is to allocate resources towards interventions that will achieve the greatest impacts.
UN OICT	*N/A*
UN Women	Funding is provided by the Government of Denmark and the Government of Norway (through Innovation Norway).
UN DOCO	The German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) funded The UNDAF Design Innovation Facility from 2015 to 2016. The Department for International Development (DFID), and the Swedish and the Swiss development cooperation agencies have joined as donors for the 2017 to 2019 period.
UNDP	The Innovation Facility is funded with resources from the Government of Denmark (co-founding donor of the Facility) and UNDP core resources and staffing support. Innovation solutions in countries are supported by partnerships with country governments, private companies and other donors (e.g. the European Commission).
Global Pulse	Global Pulse is funded through voluntary contributions from UN Member States, foundations and the private sector. Past and current donors include the governments of Australia, Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom as well as the Rockefeller Foundation. Pulse Lab Jakarta activities are mostly funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia. A small grant from GIZ funds activities related to innovation in public services.
UNHCR	Private-sector partners include UPS, Hewlett Packard, the Hunt Family and the IKEA Foundation.
UNICEF	Primary funders include the Disney Corporation, DANIDA and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland.
UN OCHA	*N/A (Work on innovation was scaled down and considerably slowed after work on innovation in the humanitarian system was completed)*
UNFPA	The Danish Government has been the main contributor to the Innovation Fund. At the end of 2016, the Finish government signed an agreement to provide support for the acceleration and scaling of the successful innovative solutions. The UK government provides funding for innovation through a regional programme in East and Southern Africa.
WFP	The Innovation Accelerator is supported by three donors in Germany: the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development in Germany; the Federal Foreign Office; and the Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry.

DID YOU KNOW THAT…?

UNHCR funds innovation work mostly through core funds and partnerships with the private sector. UNHCR began its innovation work with a distinct strategy consisting of allocating core funds to innovation initiatives. In turn, these core funds would contribute to leveraging financial funding from the private sector. Today, financial funding from the private sector has reached more than US$800,000.

ABOUT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION APPROACHES

4. The Stages of the Innovation Process

UNIN members follow different models on the stages of innovation. The majority support a complete four-stage sequence featuring *ideation*, *development*, *testing* and *scale up*. Some agencies either support specific stages or provide horizontal support to the entire sequence (in line with the nature of their organizations and corporate missions). UNIN members combine a wide variety of strategies and mechanisms when supporting innovation stages.

About the stages of innovation

Innovation is often depicted as a sequential process encompassing a series of phases or stages. These stages usually start with idea generation and end with value generation (value for society, in the case of social innovation). The number of stages and terminology used (e.g. ideation, testing, scale) varies depending on the innovation model adopted. UN agencies identify and prioritize innovation stages they want to work on. This in turn determines the appropriateness of innovation mechanisms (e.g. hackathons, bootcamps, labs, accelerators). This section presents some of the approaches to innovation stages used by UNIN members and links the 11 agencies with the innovation stages they address in their innovation models.

Different models depicting the innovation process

There are several approaches to representing the stages of innovation. According to professors Hansen and Birkinshaw (2007), innovation can be viewed as a value chain in a sequential three-phase process involving: idea generation, idea development and diffusion (dissemination across the organization).[15] The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has developed a similar stage-based approach depicting five essential stages of successful innovation (idea generation and mobilization; advocacy and screening; experimentation; commercialization; diffusion and implementation).[16]

Some UNIN members have also developed their own approaches to stages of innovation. As a result of an assessment of some of its innovation projects, Pulse Lab Jakarta developed a six-stage approach that illustrates the successful implementation of innovation for development projects (see Figure 4).[17]

Figure 4: Pulse Lab Jakarta Six-stage Approach to Innovation for Development
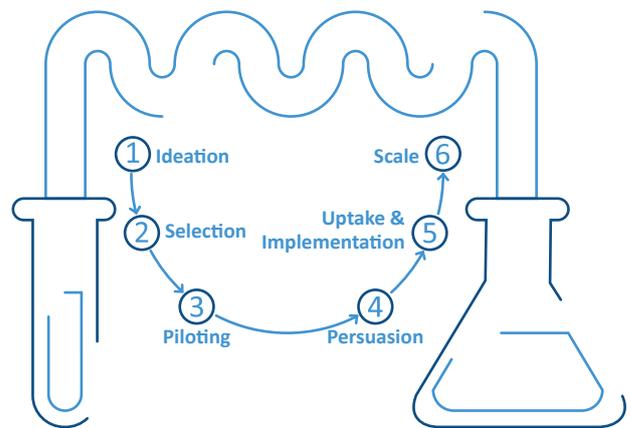
Source: Pulse Lab Jakarta. Six Stages of Innovation for Development by Andrew Thornley and Derval Usher. Available at https://medium.com/pulse-lab-jakarta/six-stages-of-innovation-for-development-23deac48a9ca

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15   Hansen, Morten T., and Julian Birkinshaw. "The innovation value chain." Harvard business review 85, no. 6 (2007): 121. hbr.org/2007/06/the-innovation-value-chain

16   MIT Sloan Management Review: The Five Stages of Successful Innovation (sloanreview.mit.edu/article/the-five-stages-of-successful-innovation/)

17   medium.com/pulse-lab-jakarta/six-stages-of-innovation-for-development-23deac48a9ca

Similarly, UN OCHA developed a five-stage approach to the innovation cycle in the Humanitarian Context (see Figure 5). The approach was presented in the report 'Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art'.[18]

Figure 5: UN OCHA proposal of Innovation Cycle in the Humanitarian Context

Source: UN OCHA. Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art. Occasional Policy Paper. Available at www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/ Humanitarian%20Innovation%20The%20State%20of%20the%20Art_0.pdf

All UNIN members have an innovation strategy and have taken an approach to innovation stages that fits their specific implementation models. The authors of this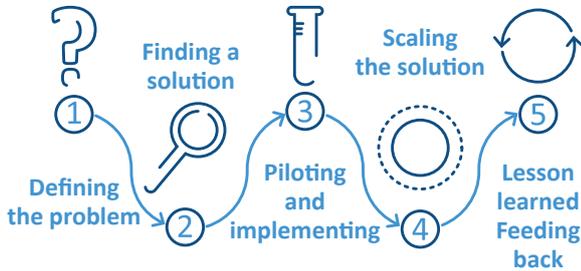 comparative study selected a four-stage sequence model illustrating the innovation life cycle (see Figure 6). This model reflects the most recurrently identified sequence based on interviews with UN agencies, innovation-specialized organizations and insights accrued from the formative evaluation.

Figure 6: The Selected Four-stage Model of Innovation Used for the Comparative Study
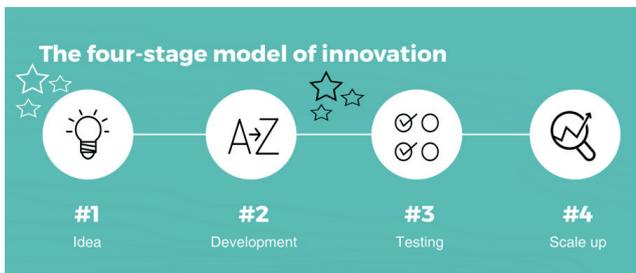
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The **'ideation'** and **'development'** phases often occur in a closely interlinked sequence (therefore discussed together in this section). 'Ideation' refers to the process of generating ideas. 'Development' refers to the further refinement, validation and development of those ideas into prototypes and testable formats (e.g. design concept, proposal). The majority of UNIN members directly support ideation processes; only UNAIDS focuses on scaling up already working solutions. UNIN members use a combination of mechanisms to support the ideation stage, including innovation challenges, hackathons, bootcamps, crowd-sourcing, innovation funds and innovation labs.[19]

At some agencies, the identification of promising ideas and potential solutions targets mostly internal staff (e.g. UNFPA, UN Women). Other agencies use a hybrid approach, combining participation of the wider community with internal staff. The Innovation Accelerator in WFP for example, combines work between internal teams (WFP staff, internal entrepreneurs) and external partners (external start-ups).

Box 1: Ideas from the Inside or the Outside: A Trade-off?

Opening up ideation processes to external actors allows agencies to connect to the innovation ecosystems in their mandate areas. When agencies recognize that other entities (e.g. the private sector or academia) may have already developed some of the best innovations, it is essential to open up the process to the outside. Conversely, supporting internal ideation processes may contribute to nurturing a culture of innovation in the organizations. There seems to be no necessary trade-off, as agencies may use hybrid approaches that allow connecting to the ecosystem (understanding that ideas can come from anywhere) and fostering a culture of innovation among staff.

'Testing' is about putting to test the developed idea (prototype or pilot) to check its feasibility, usability and effects on users. UNIN members support the testing phase in a wide variety of ways (e.g. innovation facilities, innovation funds, acceleration programmes and innovation labs).

'Scale up' refers to the processes of bringing successfully tested solutions to scale by replicating, expanding or enlarging them with the purpose of amplifying impacts. UNIN members also adopt a wide range of strategies to support scale up (e.g. innovation facilities, innovation funds, partnerships and integration into guidance and policy).

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18 www.unocha.org/publication/policy-briefs-studies/humanitarian-innovation-state-art

19 Innovation challenges and hackathons are crowd-sourcing mechanisms in which an organization makes an open call to the public requesting solutions (ideas) to a problem. Often 'hackathon' and 'bootcamp' are used interchangeably. bootcamps usually feature a more intense focus on capacity and skills development and networking, whereas, hackathons tend to focus on technological solutions and have a higher competition element than bootcamps. Crowd-sourcing platforms are another variant of innovation challenges. The goal is to source ideas from an online community in order to address challenges from a predetermined issue or question. For more details see Chapter 5, Innovation Mechanisms.

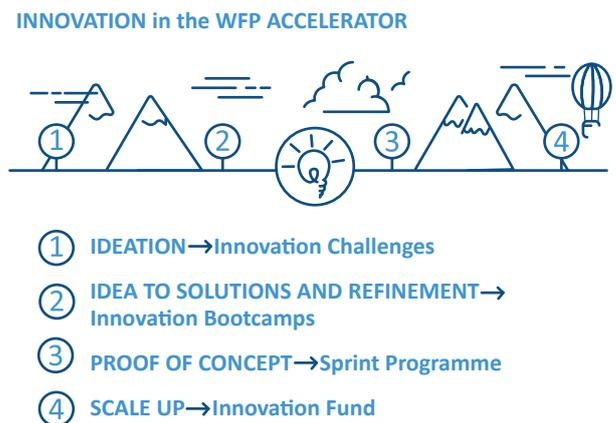### UNIN members' approaches in support of innovation processes

More than half of the UNIN members analysed address the complete four-stage innovation sequence. UN DOCO, UNDP, UN Global Pulse, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP provide support to ideation, development, testing of solutions and scaling up of successfully tested solutions. UNIN members use multiple approaches, strategies and combinations of instruments when supporting the four stages of the innovation process.

More than **half** *of the agencies analysed address the* **four stages** *of innovation*

UNICEF focuses innovation on finding new ways to accelerate results that reduce inequities for children. To foster the generation of specific solutions in this area, UNICEF country offices identify opportunities for innovative solutions through dedicated innovation leads (focal points). Ideation and development also takes place at the 13 UNICEF Innovation Labs located around the world, where innovative and creative thinkers within UNICEF can test new ideas. UNICEF supports the testing of proofs of concept and early-stage prototypes both through a co-funding venture fund and through innovation labs (which also work on proofs of concept). Scaling up proven solutions is supported by a range of partnerships and by the Global Innovation Centre (UNICEF Scale), dedicated to scaling up innovative solutions. The Centre identifies proven solutions with the potential for national-level implementation in multiple countries.

UNHCR uses innovation to identify creative solutions to refugee problems. It does so within UNHCR and throughout the private sector, helping implement these new methods in the field. To that end, UNHCR uses a combination of instruments along the four stages of innovation. Ideation is supported though a distinct, online crowd-sourced ideas platform (UNCHR Ideas) that generates ideas from refugee communities, UNHCR staff and partners. Project ideation also takes place in innovation labs. Developing ideas into prototypes and then testing the prototypes takes place through innovation projects and in the innovation labs. The UNCHR Innovation Fund, which was established in 2016 and follows the seed-funding model in the start-up sector, also enables prototyping, testing and producing new, creative solutions. Both the innovation labs and the Innovation Fund

Figure 7: Illustrative Example of the Innovation Cycle in WFP

INNOVATION in the WFP ACCELERATOR

① **IDEATION**→**Innovation Challenges**

② **IDEA TO SOLUTIONS AND REFINEMENT**→ **Innovation Bootcamps**

③ **PROOF OF CONCEPT**→**Sprint Programme**

④ **SCALE UP**→**Innovation Fund**

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the comparative tables.

play a role in the adaptation and scale up of successful innovative practices.

WFP explicitly focuses on inspiring and supporting new ideas, tools and solutions that work towards the goal of making sure no one goes hungry.

To promote specific solutions in these areas, WFP identifies promising ideas for potential solutions through innovation challenges (ideation). Solutions then get refined in three- to ten-day bootcamps (development), followed by a three- to six-month acceleration programme (Innovation Accelerator Sprint Programme) where prototypes and proofs of concept are further developed and tested (testing). Support to scale-up takes place through the Zero Hunger Acceleration Fund, which provides grants to globally scale up second-stage innovations that have reached the proof of concept stage.[20] WFP uses its Innovation Fund exclusively as a scale-up mechanism.

UNDP supports ideation and development through early stage approaches aimed at generating ideas, creating prototypes and collecting initial user feedback. Mechanisms adopted at this stage include open challenges, hackathons, innovation camps and innovation labs. UNDP also supports testing and evidence collection that support impact assessments and feasibility analysis of the innovation initiatives before they progress forward. The Innovation Facility and innovation labs play a key role in this stage. Scale-up occurs through a number of pathways, with innovation funds and the Innovation Facility playing central roles in this stage.[21] In 2013, UNDP in Asia and the Pacific launched a Scaling

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20 Note that in some agencies, 'proofs of concept' refer to a phase that precedes prototype testing, whereas in other agencies proofs of concept refer to he phase that comes after prototype testing.

21 UNDP features several scaling pathways, including innovation funds, UNDP country offices or partners deciding to invest in further scaling, and the investment framework endorsed by the Project Board in 2016 (which encourages investing 40 per cent of new resources in innovation projects that are ready to scale).

Up Fund to systematically identify successful pilot innovations and to support amplifying their impacts. At the global level, the UNDP Innovation Facility also invests in scaling up select initiatives.

UN DOCO channels support for ideation, development and testing through innovation facilities. UN DOCO scaling up approaches are also very specific and include two pathways: integrating innovative aspects (for which proofs of concept have been successful) into United National Development Group (UNDG) guidance and policies, and, whenever several UN Country Teams are working on similar innovations, co-designing solutions between country and headquarters that serve many contexts.

UN Global Pulse labs are set up to research, prototype and pilot projects, developing and testing pools of proofs of concept they constantly work on.[22] At the Pulse Lab Jakarta, solutions are generated through challenges (ideation) or with partners through joint project designs (development). Testing of solutions takes place through Pulse Lab projects, where teams prototype, test and iterate with partners, often through pilot projects. Scale-up takes place by government and civil society partners taking up and adopting the tested prototypes.

Currently, UN Women and UNFPA address only the first three stages of the innovation process. They support ideation, development and testing through innovation funds that fund innovation projects selected via calls for proposals. Both agencies are taking steps to incorporate

scale-up. UNFPA is developing a scalability framework and has started exploring possibilities to scale up proofs of concept that have been successfully tested through the Innovation Fund. In UN Women, the first scale-up of successful tests are taking place through programming; successful tests are integrated into UN Women programming and diffused across the organization.[23]

Some agencies focus on specific stages or on cross-cutting elements rather than on the entire sequence of innovation stages. This is intentional and due to the nature of their organizations. UNAIDS, for example, has a specific focus on the global scale up of solutions that have, so far, proved effective in working to end AIDS. This is operationalized in the Diagnostics Access Initiative to Achieve the 90-90-90 Treatment Target, an initiative that seeks to "maximize innovative and effective use of available tools and to develop and scale up new tools and strategies to ensure the earliest possible diagnosis of HIV."

To promote technological innovation that supports United Nations programmes, UN OICT acts as an enabler throughout the innovation process, rather than focusing on specific stages. Unite Labs, the innovation office of UN OICT, promotes technology innovation through networking, facilitating interactions and convening relevant actors. UN OICT puts in place platforms that connect available expertise, existing ideas and potential partners. It does so through a network of innovation labs, liaising with the private sector and putting in place crowd-sourcing platforms such as Unite Ideas.

5. Innovation Mechanisms

Challenges, hackatons and crowd-sourcing are the most common methods in the ideation and development stages. Six agencies use labs (there are 33 innovation labs worldwide). Innovation labs are being used to incubate and develop ideas, refine them into solutions and test them. Four UNIN members also use innovation acceleration programmes.

Mechanisms to provide support across innovation stages

Innovation mechanisms refer to the instruments UNIN members use to deliver support at each stage of the innovation process. These instruments include challenges, hackathons, boot camps, innovation labs, accelerators and innovation funds and facilities. Some agencies use these mechanisms to support specific innovation stages; others use them to provide support throughout the innovation process. The combination and sequencing of mechanisms and stages greatly determines the agency's innovation model. This chapter describes the most recurrent mechanisms operated by UNIN members as well as how they use them.

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22   According to Nesta, the innovation foundation, a proof of concept is a demonstration of an idea that is usually still incomplete. This could be a verbal, written or visual demonstration, and is used to establish whether the idea is likely to work. Proofs of concept are conducted before work begins on prototypes. (See page 24 of "Prototyping Framework. A guide to prototyping new ideas." www.nesta.org.uk/sites/default/files/prototyping_framework.pdf)

23   The UN Women innovative, **Buy from Women Platform** (prototyped and piloted in Rwanda), is currently being scaled up through **Women's Empowerment Through Climate Smart Agriculture Programmes** in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali.

Challenges, hackathons and crowd-sourcing platforms

Challenges and **hackathons** are mechanisms to generate and develop ideas (ideation and development stages). Challenges and hackathons are crowd-sourcing mechanisms in which an organization makes an open call to the public requesting solutions (ideas) to a problem. These are collaborative spaces that range from online platforms to physical spaces that bring together people with specific expertise to co-develop and test innovative ideas. These spaces can be open for any ideas or be more narrowly designed to target specific technical solutions. The UN Global Pulse uses "innovation challenges and hackathons to unite problems with problem solvers and unearth solutions from around the world in a way that emphasizes both inclusiveness and outcomes."[24]

Innovation challenges are targeted at a specific subject. Participants range from internal staff to designers, potential users, target audiences and entrepreneurs. Participants typically gather over a few days to provide solutions for specific challenge questions. This is a common innovation mechanism among UNIN members.

The UN Global Pulse Labs in Jakarta, Kampala and New York host and support innovation challenges around the world. These challenges advance the field of big data for development (e.g. The Big Ideas Competition for Sustainable Cities and Urban Communities and the Data for Climate Action open innovation challenge to channel big data for climate solutions). WFP uses innovation challenges to identify promising ideas and potential solutions. The WFP Innovation Challenge had been internal until 2016, when the Innovation Accelerator ran its first external challenge (the Food in Emergencies Global Impact Challenge, in collaboration with the Singularity University).

UNDP, together with innovation camps and hackathons, uses innovation challenges as one of the mechanisms for ideation in early stages.

UNICEF also uses challenges. In November 2015, the agency ran the Wearables for Good Challenge, a global challenge aimed to demonstrate how wearable sensor technology can be used to solve the most pressing challenges facing children. Partners participating in this challenge ranged from technical start-ups to private-sector incubation programme partners and advisers and coaches coming from a broad spectrum of private- and public-sector organizations.

Hackathons bring together computer programmers, software developers, designers and thematic area technical experts for short periods of time to develop software solutions (generally used as mobile apps on cell phones or on computers).[26] Hackathons are a natural mechanism to UN Global Pulse Labs, which focus on big data innovation. Pulse Lab Jakarta hosted the Data for Better Public Services hackathon in order to promote public-service data innovation. Pulse Lab Jakarta also links up with the HackJak (Hackathon Jakarta), coordinated by the Jakarta Provincial Government, by supporting the incubation of hackathon winners to develop their apps further.

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24   UN Global Pulse; www.unglobalpulse.org/challenges-hackathons.

25   See www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2016/3/9/Open-Innovation-Challenges-find-new-perspectives-and-solutions-to-complex-problems.html.

26   NESTA: www.nesta.org.uk/digital-social-innovation/collaboration-spaces

Similarly, UNDP innovation labs use hackathons to bring diverse actors together to generate ideas and create prototypes. For innovations that have yielded products and services, the innovation labs test and iterate the solutions prior to scaling up. UNDP country offices also use hackathons, such as the UNDP Climate Action Hackathon (launched in 2016 in Zambia by the UNDP Programme on Climate Information for Resilient Development in Africa) and the anti-corruption hackathon in Moldova in 2016.

For Innovation Fund-supported projects, UNFPA uses project proposal preparation and design to address the ideation and development stages. UNFPA has occasionally used hackathons, such as the Hack for Youth in Uganda, a three-day hackathon involving several teams of people from around the world working to develop prototypes for technology solutions (mobile health) to young people's expressed sexual reproductive health needs and challenges. The teams selected were then provided with seed funding to carry forward their ideas into full prototypes over a four-month period. The top two teams moved forward to full testing and pilot implementation over a six-month period.

UNICEF has also made occasional use of hackathons. In 2017, the agency partnered with the #vizforsocialgood community to launch a data visualization hackathon on migrant and refugees. In 2016, UNICEF Sudan launched a hackathon focused on finding innovative design solutions to improve jerry cans and hand-washing facilities in protracted emergencies.

Crowd-sourcing platforms are another variant of challenges.[27] The goal is to source ideas from an online community in order to address challenges from a predetermined issue or question. Nesta, a UK-based innovation foundation, describes the term as "a trend of curating a large number of inputs from the crowd to generate valuable insights."[28] The UNHCR crowd-sourcing platform works this way. Any division can pose a challenge; the solution is then opened to partners, UNHCR staff and refugees. A panel of experts from UNHCR selects the final idea, which is then prototyped and tested. The mechanism involves UNHCR staff as well as an online community.[29]

DID YOU KNOW THAT…?

UNHCR Ideas is a UNHCR crowd-sourcing platform used to identify new and existing solutions to refugee challenges. Since the late-2013 launch of the platform, more than 6,800 active users have collaborated on new and existing ideas to solve 13 different humanitarian challenges. 1,300 ideas have been added to the platform, involving over 9,700 comments and 11,700 votes.

Another UNIN member that uses crowd-sourcing platforms is UN OICT. Unite Ideas supports collaboration between academia, civil society and the United Nations to exchange ideas, learn from others and develop initiatives by taking on data science and visualization challenges.

Using challenges, hackathons and crowd-sourcing platforms for idea generation and development links UNIN members to the innovation ecosystem and encourages the development of new partnerships with academia and the private sector. This represents a clear added value when compared to internal-based ideation and development mechanisms such as innovation fund and innovation facility internal calls for proposals.

Innovation Labs

Innovation labs may be defined as structures that use experimental methods to address social and public challenges. Innovation labs may be one-off events, time-limited projects or permanent structures.[30] Six UNIN member agencies (of the 11 analysed) use innovation labs.

The use of innovation labs as an innovation mechanism ranges from agencies that use them as their main delivery mechanism to agencies that use them as partnership platforms. In most cases though, agencies use innovation labs to incubate and develop ideas, refine them into solutions and test them (covering ideation, development and testing stages). Some UNIN members use innovation labs as their main operational and implementation mechanism. This is the clear case for UN Global Pulse, which operates on the basis of three innovation labs. The Pulse Labs in Jakarta, Kampala and New York are set to develop proofs of concept for big data on sustainable development and humanitarian action. In 2015, Global Pulse and its partners completed 17 data innovation projects in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

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27 Crowd-sourcing and challenges are terms often used interchangeably. At times, challenges are also understood as a particular way of crowd-sourcing. The term crowd-sourcing may be used as a generic concept or as an instrument to source ideas from the public.

28 www.nesta.org.uk/digital-social-innovation/crowdsourcing

29 unhcrideas.org

30 Innovation Teams and Labs. A Practice Guide. Nesta 2014. www.nesta.org.uk/publications/innovation-teams-and-labs-practice-guide

Labs are also the main implementation mechanism for innovation at UN OICT; Unite Labs offers a number of spaces — virtual and physical — that allow for collaborative problem solving between UN staff, the private sector, academia and civil society.

UNICEF features a network of 13 country office-supported Innovation Labs, some of which are run by local civil society organizations and some by universities. Innovation Labs are physical or virtual spaces that bring together government, the private sector, academia and young people to develop and implement country-specific solutions. Innovation labs have played an important role in securing a safe space where innovative and creative thinkers within UNICEF could test new ideas unencumbered by a rigid bureaucratic structure.[31]

Box 2: Innovation Labs and Innovation Culture

Innovation Labs are safe spaces where innovation and creative thinking are encouraged. Labs can play a key role in fostering innovation skills and a culture of innovation, attracting new staff with creative and innovative skill sets and developing in-house staff capabilities to innovate. Communication between labs and teams is highly important to avoid limiting innovation and creativity to only one unit of the organization — what Sean Cornwell, Chief Digital Officer of Travelex (a London-based foreign exchange company) calls "avoiding the cool kids in the corner syndrome." Avoiding such unintentional siloing fosters a culture of learning by iteration within the organization.

Innovation labs and open innovation challenges are two of the mains tools UNDP uses to generate ideas and test solutions to address development issues. UNDP has established 13 innovations to date, six co-hosted with governments and seven hosted by country offices in partnership with private-sector organizations and academia.

In UNHCR, innovation labs are one of the three main mechanisms used to promote innovation in the organization (together with crowd-sourcing and the Innovation Fund). Innovation labs in UNHCR cover the entire innovation process (ideation, development, testing and scale up) and follow a thematic approach (Emergency, Learn, Link and Energy), with each lab linked to a division. Any division can present projects to any of the labs, which allows innovation and creativity to blend with technical expertise. Divisions, together with the Innovation Unit, select and prioritize projects. Labs then develop prototypes and test innovative ideas based on thematic approaches, operational needs and the particular context. Innovation labs in UNHCR (together with the Innovation Fund) complement country and regional programmes and focus on activities that, though not prioritized, may yield high-impact solutions in the future.

The UNAIDS Lab Initiative is a partnership among international organizations that share resources (financial, expertise, human) to better track and scale up innovative solutions. This initiative, established in June 2016, is led by the Executive Office and follows a voluntary federated approach.

The **six UNIN members** *using innovation labs feature* a **total of 33 Labs** *looking for innovative solutions around the world*

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31   UNICEF Innovation Narrative, 2016.

Accelerators

UNIN members sometimes use innovation accelerators, though not often as innovation labs and challenges. Four of the 11 UNIN members analysed run acceleration programmes. Acceleration programmes provide support to start-ups with growth potential. According to Nesta, the innovation foundation is "a typical accelerator programme [that] offers teams of entrepreneurs finance (usually in exchange for equity), work space, rigorous mentoring and business support over an intense time period, generally around 13 weeks. The aim is to help teams start up their businesses fast, quickly become investment-ready and rapidly grow."[32]

The WFP Innovation Accelerator provides the most comprehensive example of a UNIN member using an acceleration programme as an innovation mechanism. The Innovation Accelerator identifies, nurtures and scales up bold solutions to global hunger.[33] It provides support both to WFP intrapreneurs (internal WFP staff teams — internal entrepreneurs) and external start-ups and companies through financial support, mentorships, access to a network of experts and global field reach. In terms of innovation stages, the WFP Innovation Accelerator addresses ideation, testing and scale up. It does so by means of an Innovation Bootcamp to ideate and refine solutions; a Sprint Programme that tests proofs of concept and prototypes; and the Zero Hunger Acceleration Fund, a component of the Accelerator enabling the scale-up of promising ideas.

UNFPA in East and Southern Africa is running an acceleration programme (iAccelerator), which is part of an initiative designed and implemented by the regional office and funded by UKAID. The iAccelerator is a mentorship-driven acceleration programme that supports young entrepreneurs with seed funding, training and skills development to generate innovative solutions in response to challenges related to sexual and reproductive health services, sexuality education, family planning, maternal health and other population development issues in line with the UNFPA mandate.[34] The programme has been implemented in Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.

The third example is the Humanitarian Education Accelerator, established through a partnership between the UK Department of International Development (DFID), UNHCR and UNICEF. The Accelerator aims to identify effective methods to scale educational programs to expand access to quality education to refugees and displaced communities worldwide.[35] The acceleration programme, running from 2016 through 2018, offers tailored mentorships (on scaling-up processes and evaluation), organizational capacity-building bootcamps and financial support to strengthen evaluation capacity. As of August 2017, two calls for proposals have been launched and five innovation teams have entered the programme.

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32 www.nesta.org.uk/project/accelerating-startups
33 innovation.wfp.org/innovation-accelerator
34 sites.google.com/a/unfpa.org/iaccelerator-concept
35 hea.globalinnovationexchange.org

6. Innovation Funds

Seven of the 11 analysed UNIN members use innovation funds and facilities. In most cases, these mechanisms are adopted to generate and test new ideas. UNDP, UNHCR and WFP also use innovation funds and facilities to scale up successful innovation initiatives. Funds operate on the basis of calls for proposals, requests for proposals and calls for applications. Award criteria are always related to the nine UN Principles of Innovation.

The role of Innovation Funds

The reason for devoting a chapter to innovation funds is the particular focus of the formative evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Fund. Seven of the 11 UNIN members analysed (including UNFPA) use innovation funds. These are usually pool-funding mechanisms that are endowed by donors and private investors to promote innovation in the beneficiary organizations. Innovation funds play an important role in UNIN member agencies: they provide non-programmatic extra-budgetary resources that incorporate the necessary flexibility when experimenting with new ideas. UNIN members use innovation funds for several purposes and stages of innovation. The innovation funds utilize a variety of operational arrangements (e.g. open calls for proposals, targeted calls for applications, facilities with several windows and availability open to internal or external users). This chapter provides a brief overview of these purposes and arrangements.

Innovation funds are used as financial instruments to support either all or some specific stages of the innovation process. In some agencies, innovation funds encompass financial (and sometimes technical) support throughout all innovation stages. The UNDP Innovation Facility covers early stages, testing and evidence collection and scaling up of innovation projects. It also works on horizon scanning and fosters networks of innovation champions for knowledge sharing. The UNHCR Innovation Fund, which focuses on innovations in operations, also provides seed funding to innovators to design, test and scale up innovative solutions. The design of the UNHCR Innovation Fund follows the start-up seed-funding model and provides a safe budgetary space to encourage UNHCR staff to innovate.

In some agencies, innovation funds focus on one innovation stage. The UNICEF Innovation Venture Fund focuses on testing early stage innovations and operates on two windows. One window offers co-funding for country offices (alone or with external partners); the other window provides co-funding for start-ups operating in UNICEF programme countries. The UNICEF Innovation Venture Fund allows for quickly assessing, funding and growing open-source solutions that have been developed by companies in new and emerging markets. A mechanism of the Innovation Accelerator, the WFP Innovation Fund supports global scaling of second-stage innovations (i.e. innovations that have reached the proof of concept stage). The Innovation Accelerator supports and scales up promising ideas and potential solutions to help achieve the global goal of Zero Hunger by 2030. These scalable solutions may come from WFP intrapreneurs or from external start-ups and companies.

Other UNIN member's innovation funds have an internal focus. The UN Women Innovation Facility and the UNFPA Innovation Fund are based on internal calls for proposals addressed to staff in headquarters, regional and country offices. In UN Women, most funds are allocated at the country level. The UNFPA Innovation Fund's focus on nurturing a culture of innovation inside the organization it is a unique approach among UNIN members.[36]

UN DOCO uses innovation facilities to provide innovation funding to the UN system. From 2015 to 2016, UN DOCO operated the UNDAF Design Innovation Facility to support innovative proposals from United Nations Country Teams (UNCT) in the design of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) and One UN Programmes. The facility worked on four windows: data capture and analysis; public engagement and partnerships; sustainable development planning; and business operations innovations and finance.

DID YOU KNOW THAT…?

In 2015, **UN DOCO** established the UNDAF Innovation Facility to provide advisory services to all UN country teams in order to test innovations under consideration to be scaled up across the UN development system. The UNDAF (virtual) Innovation Facility is the only facility that supports all UN agencies. As of August 2017 it has provided support to 29 innovations in 25 countries, spanning innovation in data, public engagement, sustainable development planning and business operations.

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36   The Innovation Fund has the triple objective of developing a culture that nurtures innovation (culture), increasing organizational efficiency and effectiveness (organizational efficiency), and developing flexible and innovative solutions to respond to emerging development challenges (impact solutions). Among these three objectives, culture was the main goal; the Innovation Fund was designed with this in mind.

In 2017, UN DOCO built on this experience by launching the Delivering Together for Sustainable Development Facility, which is targeted at supporting UNCT innovate in policy, programming and operations. The goal is to go beyond business-as-usual approaches, making UNCT relevant to the demands of Agenda 2030.

Innovation fund management processes are quite similar across agencies, although there are some particularities in terms of governance, selection criteria and approval processes. Most funds operate on the basis of calls for proposals, requests for proposals and calls for applications. The UNICEF Innovation Fund operates on the basis of requests for proposals, focusing on country offices and start-ups in UNICEF programme countries. In UNICEF,

the application process is open and proposals can be submitted on an ongoing basis (with selected proposals being presented to the Innovation Fund Board).

Innovation funds/facilities in UN DOCO, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women operate on the basis of global and regional calls for proposals. Figures 8 and 9 provide brief illustrations of the processes in UN DOCO and in UNFPA.

UNDP and UNFPA calls for proposals have been regionalized to better adapt to regional contexts. In 2014, the region-specific UNDP Asia Pacific Innovation Fund was established with support from the Innovation Facility. UNFPA has regionalized the last calls for proposals (launched in 2016) in order to better fit regional contexts. Regional review committees shortlisted project proposals in their respective regions.

With the exception of UNFPA, most agencies apply financial caps.[37] Some agencies use fixed caps (e.g. UNHCR); other agencies apply a range of caps (e.g. UN DOCO, UNDP, UNICEF). Table 3 compares innovation fund structures and caps.

Each organization has its own selection criteria, but all are aligned to the nine UN Principles of Innovation. Table 2 provides examples of the selection criteria used by the UNDP Innovation Facility; Table 3 includes a summary of the main selection criteria used by UNIN members.

Figure 8: UN DOCO Innovation Facility: The Process in a Nutshell
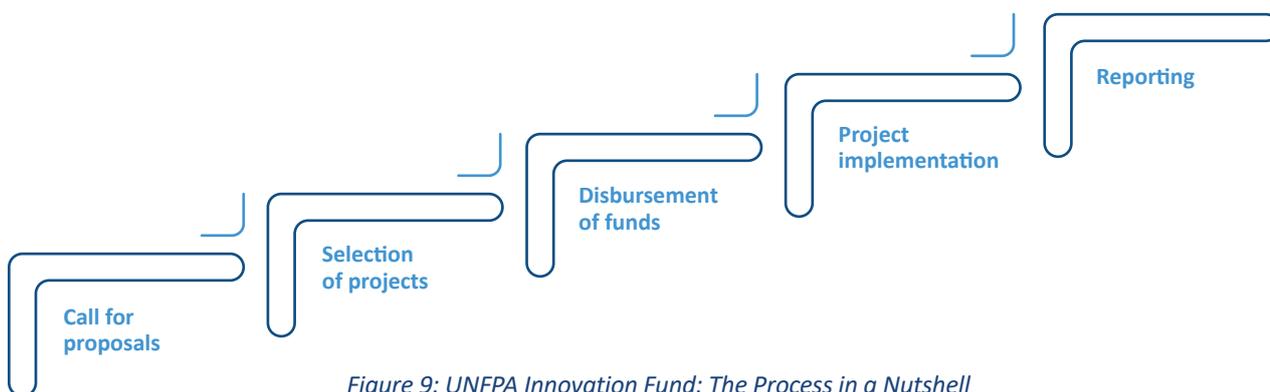
Figure 9: UNFPA Innovation Fund: The Process in a Nutshell

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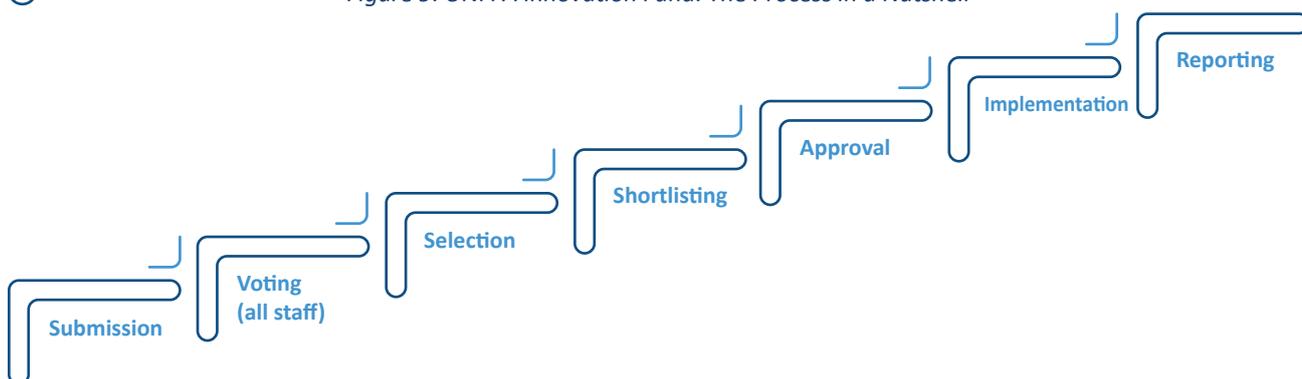
37 UNFPA does not establish caps for funding of innovative proposals in order to avoid limiting staff creativity and capacity to innovate.

Table 2. Examples of Innovation Project Selection Criteria – UNDP Innovation Facility

Selection criteria
1. Is the problem statement based on clear and solid evidence generated from a wide (and possibly "unusual") variety of sources using inclusive and participatory mechanisms?
2. Does the idea have clarity, focus and clear purpose on what its intended to achieve?
3. Does the proposal enhance the achievement or monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal target identified? (added in 2017)
4. Does the proposal catch the interest of the global development circles and beyond (or possess the "x factor")?
5. Does the proposal show evidence of research, in scanning for or seeking inspiration from similar ideas external to UNDP that can be adapted? (used 2014-2016; shifted to be within a question in 2017)
6. Can the idea be realistically tested within the suggested timeframe?
7. Does the proposal have a strong and sustainable monitoring mechanism (especially real-time monitoring) to generate actionable evidence to measure progress, success and learning?
8. Does the proposal include a path for scalability and sustainability (identifying partners that will scale the project, as well as a pathway for operational and financial sustainability)?
9. Does the proposal reflect adequate risk awareness? And an effective mitigation strategy? (2017)
10. Does the team have all the required skills to execute this? (If not, please note in the comments section what necessary skills are required to bring on board) (2017)
Additional question for proposals in the scaling phase: Does the proposal include sufficient evidence of success in the prototyping stage and offer potential for scale?

Table 3. Overview of Innovation Fund Structures among UNIN Members

Member	Launch	Origin of the funds	Funding Caps	Scope
UN Women	2015	Government of Denmark	N/A	Global open calls for initial seed projects
UN DOCO	2015	German Cooperation, DFID, Sweden and the Swiss cooperation	UNCT seed funding up to USD75,000 per window, and USD150,000 per country	Supporting joint innovations conducive to the Delivering as One approach at the country level, where innovation is at its most cutting edge
UNDP	2014	Government of Denmark (co-founding donor of the facility)	USD40,000 - USD160,000 per initiative	Programmes across the UNDP thematic portfolio
UNHCR	2016	IKEA Foundation	USD60,000 per proposal	Enables and facilitates the prototyping, testing and production of new, creative solutions to the challenges faced by refugees and the forcibly displaced
UNICEF	2015	Disney, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland	Between USD50,000 and USD100,000	UNICEF Innovation Venture Fund is a non-thematic, pooled fund specifically designed to finance early stage, open-source technology that can benefit children The Fund has two windows, one offering co-funding for country offices (alone or with an external partner) and one for start-ups in programme countries.
UNFPA	2014	Government of Denmark	No caps applied	The Innovation Fund was conceived to support pilot projects and covers mostly ideation and testing phases.
WFP	2013	Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development; Federal Foreign Office and Bavarian State Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry	The Innovation Fund structure was being finalized at the time of data collection	The Innovation Fund is a mechanism of the Accelerator that enables the scaling up of promising ideas.

Selection	Stages funded	Main selection criteria
Panel of experts	Stage 1: Ideation, early stage; Stage 2: development; Stage 3: testing.	Originality, potential impact, potential to scale, measurability of benefits, demonstrated Innovation in relation to UN Women's mandate.
UN DOCO team	Stage 2: Testing and proof of concept.	The criteria for project selection include whether the project improves the UNDAF process; accountability and inclusivity; scalability; and whether the project builds on standard operation procedures.
The regional bureaux at the headquarters, the regional innovation leads, thematic experts and members of the private sector drawn from thematic experts' networks	Stage 1: Ideation, early stage; Stage 2: testing and evidence collection; Stage 3: prototype; Stage 4: scaling up.	There are ten selection criteria. The organization also has a 'scaling checklist' with a scaling framework. These guidelines are being updated with the Brookings Institute and aligned to the work of the Scaling Working Group of the International Development Innovation Alliance.
The Innovation Service in UNHCR	Stage 1: Ideation, early stage; Stage 2: prototype; Stage 3: testing.	Criteria include the type of challenge addressed; innovative tools and techniques incorporated in the proposal (new or new to the context); the prioritization of the issue at stake; design with the user (refugees); feasibility; potential impacts; and mainstreaming the innovation into daily operations on a long-term base.
Projects are assessed by the Innovation Fund team and recommended for funding to the internal board	Stage 1: Ideation, early stage; Stage 2: development; Stage 3: testing.	Mandatory requirements for companies to be considered for funding: registered as a private company in a UNICEF programme country; working on open source technology solutions (or willing to be open source); an existing prototype of the open source solution with promising results from initial pilots; solution with potential to positively impact the lives of the most vulnerable children; generating publicly exposed real-time data that is measurable. In the first stage of the application process, criteria are: developing new technology; expanding/improving existing technology/platform; piloting a new use case for existing technology. Shortlisted companies submit in-depth technical and financial proposals.
The Inter-divisional Working Group on Innovation, the Strategy Board and the Executive director (all internal)	Stage 1: Ideation, early stage; Stage 2: development; Stage 3: testing.	Project selection criteria include 23 specific questions around five areas: the problem or opportunity / justification of the project (15 per cent); a well-defined solution (25 per cent); an innovative approach (25 per cent); success metrics (20 per cent); and knowledge dissemination (15 per cent).
The Innovation Fund structure was being finalized at the time of data collection.	Stage 4: Scale up.	The Fund is an activity of the WFP Innovation Accelerator and provides grants to second stage innovations that have reached a proof of concept to scale globally.

7. Innovation Partnerships

Most UNIN members have developed innovation-focused partnerships. These partnerships span from strategic partnerships to activity-based partnerships. The longer the trajectory of innovation within the agency is, the higher the prominence of partnerships as a core strategy. The most common are partnerships with the private sector and academia that leverage the expertise, resources and skills required to develop innovative solutions. Innovation-focused partnerships require substantial human resource investments to develop. UN procedures make it challenging to develop private-sector partnerships. The scope and degree of innovation-focused partnerships between UNIN members has been quite modest to date.

Partnerships and Innovation

The February joint meeting of several UN agency Executive Boards declared "as governments are elaborating on the Sustainable Development Goals and targets for the new development agenda, innovation and the role of cross-sector partnerships are increasingly important to accelerate progress on the most pressing issues."[38]

Partnerships play a key role in innovation processes and approaches. The executive summary of a recent case study on innovation in the United Nations asserted "encouragingly, there is now a growing body of work that shows how innovation and new partnerships can help the UN more effectively engage with its external stakeholders."[39] Promoting and cultivating new, unique innovation-focused partnerships is of the essence in order to understand innovation ecosystems and navigate the innovation process. The importance of collaborations and partnerships in successful innovation ecosystems is widely acknowledged.[40] This chapter provides a snapshot on the role and approaches to partnerships in innovation across the organizations analysed.

Most UNIN members have developed innovation-focused partnerships. The depth and outreach of these partnerships varies, from agencies adopting innovation-focused strategic partnerships (at the core of their innovation strategy), to agencies working on activity-based collaborations. The UN Global Pulse is an example a UN initiative that embeds strategic partnerships in innovation as part of its corporate strategy. At the Global Pulse, global- and country-level strategic partnerships are considered key components of joint innovation in the Pulse Labs. Strategic partnerships are also considered key to fostering the enabling environment required for the success of Big Data for Development research and advocacy.[41]

Partners may collaborate with the Global Pulse and its network of Global Pulse Labs in four areas: data philanthropy, technology, expertise (making experts available), and sponsorship. The Global Pulse features a wide network of partners, including private companies (e.g. Amazon Web Services, Crimson Hexagon, DataSift, Mediatrac, Microsoft, Orange and Planet Labs); academic institutions (e.g. Makerere University, New York University's GovLab and Polytechnic School of Engineering, the University of Cambridge and the University of Leiden); and government and international organizations (e.g. the governments of Ghana, Indonesia and the Republic of Korea, the Australian

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, GIZ and the World Bank).

UNAIDS is the only agency that has not developed innovation-focused partnerships. Instead, UNAIDS includes innovation into already existing partnerships. It does so, for example with UNITAID[42] (to leverage its impact on expanding access to services and product-based preventive tools), with African institutions (e.g. African Union Commission, the African Development Bank), and with the Medicines Patent Pool (to elaborate analyses on the patent landscape of HIV medicines and forecasting of newer HIV-related products).

In general, the longer the trajectory of innovation within the agency, the higher the prominence of partnerships as a core strategy. This is the case in UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP. Partnerships are a central element of the innovation approach in UNICEF. UNICEF Ventures (New York), UNICEF Futures (San Francisco) and UNICEF Scale (Global Innovation Centre in Bangkok) are all eminently driven by an explicit partnership approach. Similarly, innovation labs are based on country-level partnerships with local civil society organizations and universities. A distinct feature in UNICEF is that the expertise required for innovation is often a product of exchanges with the private sector through partnerships (e.g. UNICEF Futures in San Francisco working with

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38 Innovation in the UN: A session of the Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UNICEF, UN Women and WFP. February 2, 2015.

39 The relevance of innovation to the United Nations – what has been tried, and what have we learned. Case Study Series #2, 2017. United Nations System Staff College.

40 hbr.org/2014/04/how-innovation-ecosystems-turn-outsiders-into-collaborators; ssir.org/articles/entry/the_new_economics_of_innovation_ecosystems; ssir.org/articles/entry/cultivate_your_ecosystem

41 unglobalpulse.org/partnerships

42 UNITAID (the International Drug Purchasing Facility) is a global health initiative that is working with partners to end the world's tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria epidemic.

Google and Facebook on mapping development response to emergencies; the Innovation Office working with mobile data operators in the Ebola and Zika crises). UNICEF features strategic partnerships with big data providers such as Google, IBM, Telefónica and Amadeus.

According to **UNDP** Innovation Facility monitoring data, country offices that tested new ways of working have reported twice as many partnerships with the private sector, foundations and international financial institutions than those not testing new ways of working. These offices also reported 40 per cent more partnerships with academia and think tanks. Further, monitoring data reveals that country offices that received funding or advisory services from the Innovation Facility are more likely (65 per cent on average) to engage young women and men in designing solutions.

The UNHCR Innovation Service sees the role of partners as paramount to its work, recognizing that some of the best innovations have already been developed by the private sector. The Innovation Service seeks to partner with companies and academic institutions to adopt existing innovations to the refugee context and to develop innovative solutions together (e.g. with Stanford University, UPS Foundation, the IKEA Foundation, Google, Facebook, Oxford University's Humanitarian Innovation Project and UN sister agency innovation teams). The broad portfolio of partners in UNHCR serves its core strategies of connecting outside and inside expertise; engaging outsiders in crowd-sourcing of ideas; and promoting outsiders' engagement by letting people see what they do inside UNHCR.

UNDP Innovation Facility monitoring data reveals that the organization highly emphasizes partnerships. In UNDP country offices, 40 per cent of the innovation initiatives are tripartite partnerships between UNDP, governments and the private sector. In addition, half of UNDP innovation initiatives in 23 countries have partnered with the private sector to test and scale solutions. Partners include IBM, Microsoft, Unilever, Baidu, Barclays and local start-ups in Myanmar and Bangladesh. Similarly, 50 per cent of the innovation initiatives funded by the Innovation Facility worked with academic and research institutes to generate ideas and explore new solutions across 15 Sustainable Development Goals in 23 countries. Half of UNDP innovation initiatives across 24 countries partnered with civil society organizations. In UNDP, partnerships also play an important role when scaling up innovative solutions.[43]

Partnerships are a key feature of innovation in WFP and are used throughout the innovation process. Some partnerships are developed in the Innovation Accelerator by innovation staff and innovation project teams. The Accelerator maintains partnerships with governments, academia and private-sector firms and start-ups. In addition, the research and development team (Thought Leadership) within the Accelerator works with UN sister agencies, academia and the private sector to explore new trends, technologies and long-term project strategies that can help move towards Zero Hunger. Small-scale partnerships include partnerships with start-ups and NGOs through the Accelerator; large-scale partnerships include TNT, Unilever and Pepsico.

Some agencies focus on activity- and project-based innovation partnerships and collaborations. The UN OCHA strategic plan is explicit in giving a particular weight to partnerships in innovation when it sets forth that OCHA will play a brokering role to bring together new and existing partners and to foster "a number of transformational partnerships through which business innovation and expertise can contribute innovative approaches to existing and future systemic challenges."[44] As a result, OCHA has partnered for specific activities and events with a number of private-sector actors (e.g. DHL for supply chain and logistics expertise; Deloitte for leadership development for humanitarian actions; and Ericsson for technical know-how), with the humanitarian community (e.g. World Humanitarian Summit: NGOs, civil society) and with other UN agencies (UNDP, UNHCR, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction). The 2015 Creative Minds for Humanitarian Solutions hackathon, supported by OCHA in partnership other UN agencies, NGOs and the private sector, is an example of an activity-based partnership that emerged from this strategic plan.

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43   The "Invest in Innovation" section of the Innovation Facility Brochure identifies sample pipeline initiatives with significant scale potential for which UNDP is actively seeking additional partners and funds.

44   See page 31 of the OCHA Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

Promoting and cultivating new, unusual, unique innovation-focused partnerships, particularly with the private sector, are central elements of the UNFPA Innovation Concept Paper. Partnerships in UNFPA have mostly been project-based. Partnerships with the private sector have been established in the framework of innovation projects (e.g. partnership with Phillips in the frame of a project in Kenya; with the Nailab start-up incubator in Kenya in the context of the iAccelerator). Similarly, partnerships with academia include collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the context of the Hack for Youth project in Uganda, and the partnership with Innovations in Healthcare (Duke University) in the context of the iAccelerator in Kenya.

Most UNIN members partner with the private sector and academia in order to leverage the expertise, resources and skills required to developing innovative solutions. UN OICT, for example, promotes cross-sector partnerships between academia, the private sector and civil society in order to exchange innovation ideas and resources. UN DOCO also displays a wide range of partnerships. The Office has a formal partnership with Nesta, a UK-based innovation foundation, for testing and transferring knowledge and capacity to UN teams on the ground. UN DOCO has an alliance with UN Global Pulse in the area of big data (Global Pulse put together guidance for big data privacy and protection and UN DOCO scaled the guidance to the entire UN System). UN DOCO has also established partnerships with private-sector companies (e.g. with Tableau Software, a company that develops data visualization software, and with AID:Tech on blockchain).

UN Women is an exception is this regard, as most of its innovation-related partnerships are with other UN agencies. Its rationale for partnerships is mostly to learn how other UN agencies approach work on innovation and to scale innovation successes.

Box 3: UN Procedures Make Partnerships with the Private Sector Challenging

At times, partnerships with the private sector have developed despite UN procedures rather than as a result of them. Albeit necessary, due diligence procedures are not fully adapted to developing private-sector partnerships. In UNFPA, for example, procedures do not yet contemplate private-sector firms as implementing partners. In WFP, the Innovation Accelerator is a private-sector accelerator, with its own partnership procedures. This overcomes procedural difficulties and allows the Accelerator to focus on private-sector start-ups.

The comparative analysis reveals that innovation-focused partnerships require organizations to devote substantial human resources to developing them. In UNICEF, a considerable number of staff work on partnerships. UNICEF Futures looks at how UNICEF can work with the private sector; the UNICEF Ventures team focuses on collaboration strategies with large technological companies (specifically around big data). The UNICEF Ventures team is an additional resource devoted to developing partnership strategies. Further, the UNICEF Private Fund-raising Partnership Unit has an innovation focal point that works closely with the Office of Innovation.

In UNDP, the project management funding line of the Innovation Facility Fund has resources allocated to developing partnerships. The Pulse Lab Jakarta, since its inception, has featured several positions related to partnership development: a partnership coordinator in charge of collaborative partnerships supporting the Lab's research agenda; a partnerships adviser position; and several government liaison officers working at the Lab (coordinating with government counterparts on day-to-day arrangements).

In UN OICT, resources allocated to developing partnerships come from the core budget of the organization. UNHCR also allocates core funds to innovation initiatives, which helps the organization leverage private-sector financial funding.[45]

In WFP, innovation staff at the Innovation Accelerator and innovation project teams work on partnership development. The UN Women innovation team works on partnerships in close collaboration with the Strategic Partnership Division. In UN DOCO, resources to developing partnerships are allocated on a case-by-case basis, depending on the type of arrangement. In UNFPA, the Innovation Fund Secretariat works on global partnerships, although with limited time and budgetary allocations earmarked to that purpose. The 2016 establishment of the UNFPA Strategic Partnerships Branch offers good prospects in terms of developing innovation-specific partnerships with large and small private-sector firms.

The scope and intensity of innovation-focused partnerships among UNIN members has been quite modest. UNIN members interact in several forums, for example in the meetings of the innovation network, in the framework of the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (UNDP, UNICEF, OCHA, UNFPA and WFP), and in the UN Data Innovation Lab workshops, an inter-agency collaboration on innovation that involves several UNIN members (UN Global Pulse, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNFPA and WFP).[46] UNHCR and UNICEF are involved in a three-year innovation-focused partnership in the Humanitarian Education Accelerator.

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45   The IKEA foundation has funded the Energy Lab coordinator position in the UNHCR Innovation Office and has endowed the Innovation Fund with resources.

46   undatainnovationlabworkshop.wikispaces.com

Notwithstanding these examples, there are a considerable number of areas of common interest in which the development of innovation-focused partnerships has been very modest. UNIN members have yet to share experiences or insights on areas of common interest such as innovation lab approaches, innovation culture within the organizations, models for working with start-ups or innovation-specific monitoring and evaluation systems.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

Project-level monitoring systems range from progress reporting to real-time monitoring. Some agencies are developing outcome-based monitoring systems. The majority of UNIN members use progress-reporting systems to monitor innovation projects, especially those supported by innovation funds and facilities. Several agencies are developing monitoring and evaluation frameworks for innovation mechanisms (e.g. accelerators, innovation funds/facilities). Evaluation (of innovation) is under development. Three UNIN members incorporate indicators of innovation in their Integrated Results and Resources Framework at the corporate level.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Innovation

Innovation is largely about testing assumptions, iteration and learning and about understanding what works, for whom, why and under what circumstances. In this context, monitoring and evaluation systems are an integral component of innovation processes and approaches. Monitoring and evaluation for innovation across the 11 UNIN members analysed takes places at three levels (see Figure 10): at the individual project/solution level; at the level of innovation mechanisms (e.g. innovation funds/facilities, accelerators and labs); and at the corporate level, mostly in relation to the inclusion of innovation indicators in strategic plan's results frameworks.

Monitoring and Evaluation of innovation projects and innovative solutions

Figure 10: The three levels of monitoring and evaluation of innovation frameworks
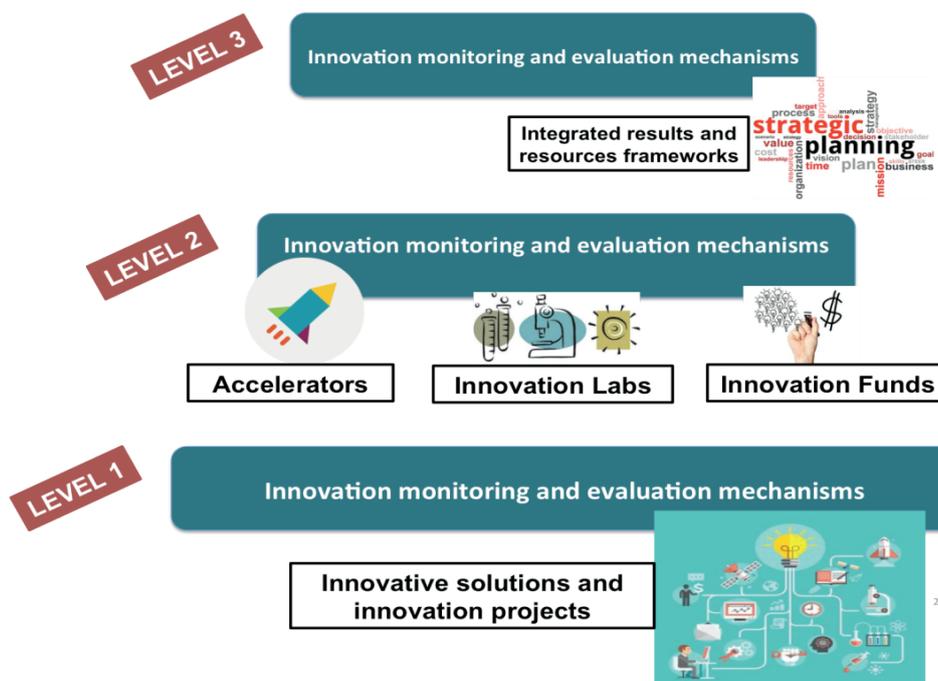
At the innovation project level, UNIN members use a variety of monitoring systems, ranging from progress reporting mechanisms to real-time monitoring. UNICEF has adopted real-time monitoring across its innovation portfolio (and beyond). The UNICEF Innovation Fund website allows for exploration of individual projects and tracking of the overall portfolio in real time.[47] UNICEF uses dashboards that provide real-time information aggregated at the project, portfolio and Innovation Fund level. The management dashboard also provides expenditure reporting.

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47   unicefinnovationfund.org/#/about

This system allows contributors and investors to continually monitor progress. Furthermore, innovation projects use real-time information tools (such as U-Report, EduTrac and mTrac) for real-time output and outcome monitoring.[48] The UNICEF Innovation Fund uses six- and twelve-month monitoring reporting templates for projects supported by country offices. Start-ups are monitored through a dedicated portfolio manager, who tracks performance against agreed milestones.

The UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy stipulates the need to develop real-time monitoring of services and programmes in order "to enable critical data to be collected and disseminated using widely available tools such as mobile phones and the cloud."[49] The new business approach (Fast-Tracking) presented in the Strategy proposes changing the monitoring and evaluation systems to one that allows for real-time monitoring and web-based data visualization.[50] This requirement was not exclusive to innovation projects, but of application across UNAIDS programmes.

As the UNDP Innovation Facility portfolio matures, the Innovation Unit is considering developing a real-time monitoring approach for innovation projects (similar to the approach adopted by UNICEF). This would encompass real-time monitoring of data through, for example, digital media and cell phone usage. The Innovation Unit has started working with randomized control trials, A/B Testing and Fast-Feedback methods.[51]

Some agencies are in the process of developing outcome-based monitoring systems. In UNHCR, each innovation lab poses a number of measuring questions to gauge innovation project progress. The Learn Lab, for example, measures progress by inquiring into aspects such as community-driven design (the extent to which the design process was done with the user); educational impact (the degree to which the solution contributes to improving educational quality); and scaling solutions (requests from other locations to adapt solutions for use in their context). The UNDP Innovation Facility works with country offices to formulate hypotheses with clear success indicators in order to test the effectiveness and comparative advantage of innovative models. Innovation model success is assessed using variables related to scaling, uptake, breadth and amount of new funding triggered, new partnerships, reach and inclusiveness of the process and impact of the solutions.

The majority of UNIN members use progress-reporting systems to monitoring innovation projects, particularly those supported by innovation funds and facilities. UN DOCO uses a reporting package that includes a midway learning report, end-results note, short stories (including blogs), and a financial report. The midway learning report and the end-results note are used to identify successes and failures. In UN DOCO there are no standard tracking mechanisms to monitor the success of the innovative solutions; it is up to the applicants to the Facility to establish these mechanisms.

The UNFPA Innovation Fund features a monitoring mechanism covering the follow-up of individual projects. This mechanism consists of an input (financial), activity and output-level reporting system based on logical frameworks. Similarly, the Facility in UN Women follows an activity-based monitoring system based on reporting templates designed by the Innovation Unit.

In WFP, the Innovation Accelerator team conducts quarterly reviews of the performance of innovation projects (checking achievements). Regular monitoring in WFP follows lean start-up methodology principles, which are applied to the entire acceleration process. In UNDP, country offices receiving funding have to report additional information outlined in a template documenting results and insights (the end-of-year Report).

Monitoring and Evaluation of Innovation Mechanisms

Several UNIN members are developing monitoring and evaluation systems for innovation mechanisms. Pulse Lab Jakarta is developing a monitoring and evaluation Framework for the Lab; WFP is developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for the Innovation Accelerator (including a results framework); and in UNFPA, the East and Southern Africa regional office is working with Innovations in Healthcare (Duke University) on the development on a monitoring and evaluation framework for the iAccelerator programme. Preliminary work for the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the UNFPA Innovation Fund has also been conducted.

The Innovation Facility at UN DOCO did not feature an overall monitoring and evaluation framework during its first two years. At present, the funding framework of the Delivering Together Facility for Sustainable Development includes a window on innovation that features a monitoring and evaluation framework. The only completed monitoring and evaluation framework for an innovation mechanism among UNIN members is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework of the Global Innovation Centre in UNICEF.

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48 These tools are powered by RapidPro, an open source software platform for international development launched by UNICEF in 2014. The tools make it easy to design, pilot, and scale services that connect directly with mobile users. www.unicef.org/innovation/innovation_91022.html

49 Page 56 of the UNAIDS 2016-2021 Strategy.

50 This comparative analysis could not gather any information of actual examples of the application of the system.

51 A/B testing, also called split testing, is commonly used in web development and consists of controlled experiments with two variants.

Monitoring and evaluation of innovation in the agencies' results frameworks

Three UNIN members integrate innovation into their integrated results and resources frameworks at the level of outputs/outcomes and into concrete indicators. As shown in Table 4, this is the case in UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF.[52]

Table 4. Inclusion of Innovation in Integrated Results and Resources Frameworks

UNDP **(Integrated Results and Resources Framework 2014-2017)**
Output 7.6: Innovations enabled or development solutions, partnerships and other collaborative arrangements **Indicator 7.6.1:** Number of new public-private partnership mechanisms that provide innovative solutions for development **Indicator 7.6.2:** Number of pilot and demonstration projects initiated or scaled up by national partners (e.g. expanded, replicated, adapted or sustained)
UNHCR (Results framework 2014**)**
Objective: Security management reinforced as an organizational culture **Indicator:** Innovations introduced to increase effectiveness of security training
Objective: Capacities, skills and knowledge fostered and developed **Indicator:** Innovative training delivery methodologies and mechanisms implemented
UNICEF **(Integrated results and resources framework 2014-2017)**
Outcome 5: Improved learning outcomes and equitable and inclusive education **Indicator P5.b.1:** Countries with innovative approaches at scale to improve access to education and learning outcomes for the most disadvantaged and excluded children
Result: (Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency): Efficient and effective management of supplies enables achievement of programme results **Indicator DE.20:** Number of innovations that reach a predefined end-point

In some instances, innovation is incorporated into integrated results and resources frameworks, but not operationalized in indicators. The 2016-2021 Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework,[53] the Joint Programme instrument operationalizing the UNAIDS Strategy (On the Fast-Track to end AIDS) features Output 7.3, formulated as: "technological, service delivery and mHealth innovations fostered." The narrative of this output points explicitly at the promotion of innovation in HIV service delivery, including mobile health, eHealth and telehealth. The UNFPA Integrated Results Framework 2014-2017 includes an output under organizational effectiveness and efficiency formulated as "increased adaptability through innovation, partnership and communication." There are no specific indicators on innovation associated to this output. The UN Women Integrated Results Framework 2014-2017 does not include any outcomes, outputs or indicators explicitly related to innovation.[54]

Box 4: Innovation, Scaling up and Monitoring and Evaluation systems
'Design for scale' is one of the nine UN Principles of Innovation. This principle, among other aspects, implies two things. First, it implies that the intent to scale should be embedded in innovation solutions from the outset. Second, it implies that solutions/projects are replicable and customizable in other countries and contexts and demonstrate impact before scaling a solution. Therefore, scaling up successful innovation solutions requires a critical understanding of how the solutions work, why, for whom and under what circumstances. This entails looking at unintended outputs and outcomes (not only at planned activities and outputs), collecting data on outcomes throughout the process (real-time outcome based monitoring) and assessing the impact of the solutions (impact evaluation). These requirements, ultimately, call for innovation-specific monitoring and evaluation systems.

Three UNIN members incorporate corporate-level reporting mechanisms on innovation. At the UN system level, innovation is a joint UN effort monitored by UN DOCO. The Global reporting system for UNCT inquiries into 11 areas of work, one of which has a question on innovation ("does the UNCT apply innovation during UN country programming?"). The UNDP Results Oriented Annual Report, completed by all country offices, features a section on innovation. Similarly, UNICEF country offices report through the Country Office Annual Report, which features two innovation-related questions. Further, UNICEF's Annual Report highlights the contribution of innovation towards the goals of the strategic plan (the annual report features a section on innovation and partnerships).[55]

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52   The frameworks used for this comparative analysis are those for the planning period 2014-2017. Frameworks for the 2018-2021 period were being developed (and were not yet completed) at the time of data collection.

53   The Unified Budget, Results and Accountability Framework is the UNAIDS instrument to maximize the coherence, coordination and impact of the UN response to AIDS by combining the efforts of UN Co-sponsors and UNAIDS Secretariat in 2012-2015.

54   The 2018-20121 framework (available at the time of writing this report) includes two indicators on innovation: "number of initiatives implemented in partnership with the private sector to scale up innovations that address the challenges faced by women and girls" and "number of UN Women offices and units that pilot or scale up digital innovations."

55   www.unicef.org/publications/index_96412.html

Evaluation of innovation

The innovation evaluation function is under development. In UNDP, each innovation initiative undergoes an evaluation of the larger project they are inserted into. Moreover, the "working out loud" and the end-of-year report to the Innovation Team allow for ongoing assessments and corrective action to inform programming. In 2014, a one-time evaluation of the Knowledge and Innovation in the Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States Region 2012-2013 initiative was conducted to assess the trajectory of this initiative and accrue learning. In UNFPA, a formative evaluation of the corporate Innovation Initiative was conducted two years after the establishment of the Innovation Fund.[56]

DID YOU KNOW THAT…?

The Formative Evaluation of the **UNFPA** Innovation Initiative, including the Innovation Fund, was not a donor requirement. The Innovation Fund Secretariat initiated this evaluation as part of its 2016 work plan with the motivation to critically reflect on lessons learned from the promotion of innovation since the creation of the UNFPA Innovation Fund in 2014. To ensure the independence of the evaluation, the Secretariat of the Innovation Fund entrusted the management of the process to the UNFPA Independent Evaluation Office.

At the time of this comparative analysis, an external evaluation of a UNFPA Innovation Fund-implemented project had been conducted. The evaluation focused on the outputs and achievements of the UN shared Vehicle Pool project (and intra-agency initiative involving UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA).

The UNICEF Global Evaluation Plan 2014-2017 includes a thematic evaluation on technology in development. UNICEF intends to launch the evaluation at the end of 2017. The monitoring and evaluation framework of the Global Innovation Centre in UNICEF also includes evaluations. To date, there have been a number of independent evaluations that have analysed the effects of UNICEF work on innovation (e.g. a Multi-Country Independent Evaluation on Technological Innovations in the Eastern and Southern Africa region in 2016 and an evaluation on the scaling potential of mobile health tools commissioned by USAID).[57] At the Pulse Lab Jakarta, work is in progress in relation to the design of evaluations for promising solutions.

In UN DOCO, the innovation process is at an early stage, and evaluation has not yet been introduced. The situation is very similar in UN Women, where innovation projects funded by the Innovation Facility are one to two years old, which is considered not mature enough to start conducting evaluations of the Facility.

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56   This comparative analysis is part of the Formative Evaluation of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative.

57   Sherri Haas. May 2016. mHealth Compendium, Special Edition 2016: Reaching Scale. Arlington, VA: African Strategies for Health, Management Sciences for Health.
www.africanstrategies4health.org/uploads/1/3/5/3/13538666/2016_mhealth_31may16_final.pdf

ABOUT INNOVATION CULTURE AND MAIN INSIGHTS ON INNOVATION

9. Nurturing a Culture of Innovation

UNIN members promote a culture of innovation through a wide range of approaches and mechanisms. Some by fostering staff leadership and some by developing ways to recognize staff innovation efforts. UNIN members agree on the need to create spaces where staff is encouraged to innovate without fear of failure. Efforts to develop capacity to innovate are deliberate. Innovation is seen as an attitude and as a skill; always in combination with expertise in technical areas. UNIN members emphasize that knowledge from innovation experiences should be shared not only inside their organizations, but also across the entire UN system.

The weight of organizational culture on innovation

Developing an organizational culture that nurtures innovation was a central foundational cornerstone of the UNFPA Innovation Initiative and Innovation Fund. Academic research repeatedly shows that organizational culture and innovation are linked.[58] Organizational culture has an important effect on innovation capabilities and performance. Culture affects the outcomes of the organization as well as staff behaviour, learning and development (including those linked to innovation). A 2012 empirical study on the role of organizational culture on innovation capability reveals that organizational cultures that promote change, experimentation and a creative workplace, along with new product development, are more likely to enable an innovation-friendly environment.

According to the UNFPA Innovation Concept Paper of 2014, "a culture that nurtures innovation is one that facilitates the development and acceptance of new ideas, allows the organization to take risks in implementing innovative ideas and learns from successes and failures." This, in turn, is linked to incentives, recognition, spaces to innovate and capacity to do so. This chapter compares how UNIN members address these elements.

Empowering staff to innovate through leadership roles

Some agencies promote a culture of innovation by fostering staff leadership. Offering staff the opportunity to design and lead the implementation of their own innovative projects encourages staff leadership in innovation. The Innovation Accelerator of WFP, for example, provides a week of mentorship to the teams that make it to the final phase of the ideation process. The teams subsequently apply the acquired knowledge and produce a project plan to implement their project. This is also the approach in agencies that use internal, open calls for proposals through Innovation Funds, such as UNFPA. At present, there are 29 innovation focal points leading the implementation of innovation projects financed by the UNFPA Innovation Fund.[59]

This alone, however, is often not enough to prompt a meaningful effect unless it is accompanied by explicit recognition throughout all of the organization's hierarchical levels (making the work and effort of the innovation champions visible across the organization). In UNDP for example, staff members that are awarded funds for innovation projects are explicitly recognized by country office senior management and are encouraged to blog about their progress.

Staff graduating from the UNHCR 12-month Fellowship programme not only benefit from learning about the innovation process and innovation design methods, but also become innovation champions for the organization.[60] In UN DOCO, staff are intentionally rotated at the Innovation Facility. Every year the role of Area Lead is offered to a new staff member as an opportunity. By doing this, the Innovation Facility seeks motivated people willing to interact with field offices in innovation activity implementation.

58   Three recent studies include Sylvie Laforet, (2016) "Effects of organisational culture on organisational innovation performance in family firms", Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, Vol. 23; Yeşil, Salih, and Ahmet Kaya. "The role of Organizational culture on innovation Capability: an empirical study." International Journal of Information Technology and Business Management 6.1 (2012): 11-25; and Julia C. Naranjo-Valencia, Daniel Jiménez-Jiménez, Raquel Sanz-Valle, (2011) "Innovation or imitation? The role of organizational culture", Management Decision, Vol. 49 Issue: 1, pp.55-72.

59   Innovation focal point, innovation champion, innovation lead and innovation catalyser are several of the terms used by UNIN members. In this chapter they are considered to be synonymous.

60   www.unhcr.org/innovation/innovation-fellowship

Enabling safe spaces for trial and fail

UNIN members agree on the need to create spaces where staff is encouraged to innovate without the fear of failure. There are two types of spaces: spaces that encourage staff to think differently and spaces that encourage staff to do things differently. UNFPA Innovation Days are an example of the first level. In Innovation Days, staff in regional, country and headquarters offices come together to exchange on innovation concepts and to brainstorm on opportunities and challenges using methodologies drawn from design thinking and creative problem-solving. In some cases, the UNFPA Innovation Fund has supported project ideas that were generated in Innovation Days. Innovation in UN Women has worked best where regional directors and country representatives made it a priority by incorporating 'thinking days' or 'thinking mornings' to prompt thought-provoking spaces as part of the regular activities of the offices.

Spaces to do things differently are spaces to co-design and test innovations, in which specific rules reward creativity, risk-taking and the drive to attempt solutions beyond business-as-usual. Most innovation mechanisms presented in Chapter 5 (innovation labs, hackathons, accelerators) are designed with these elements in mind.

UNICEF describes Innovation Labs as a "safe space where innovative and creative thinkers can test new ideas without being trapped in a rigid bureaucratic structure." The Innovation Fund in UNFPA was intended, from the onset, as a mechanism to provide incentives to innovate by encouraging staff to submit innovative proposals (beyond business-as-usual). The Innovation Accelerator in WFP, open to internal staff, offers recognition as well as a proper environment for risk-taking. The teams of intrapreneurs (WFP staff) are accompanied and provided with guidance along the innovation process through a mentorship programme.

"Through accelerator activities there has been a noticeable **change in innovation culture** *with an increase in the number of innovation projects underway"*

Insight from WFP

Making the invisible visible: recognition and acknowledgement

Innovation in UNIN members is often linked to volunteer efforts and self-drive. UNIN members have developed a number of ways to recognize these efforts and build a culture of innovation. In many agencies, especially those with fewer staff fully dedicated to innovation, innovation-specific tasks are considered as an add-on to regular duties. Staff involved in innovation often work on a volunteering basis. They take in the additional workload driven by motivation and self-drive. Several UNIN members make sure these efforts do not go unrecognized.

In UN Women, the Executive and Deputy Executive Directors congratulate country representatives (directly by email) on the way innovation has been incorporated in their ways of working. In the Asia Pacific region, the UNDP Regional hub gives innovation trophies to the top performing offices at strategic meetings. Further, the UNDP newsletter specifically includes the profile of a UNDP innovator every month. A deliberate incentive used by several UNIN members is to support and share the work of 'positive deviants' publicly through blogs, newsletter and by sending emails recognizing their innovation initiatives.[61] UN DOCO does this by means of the UNDG blog silofighters.org.

UNICEF hosts the well-known website UNICEF Stories of Innovation.[62] The UNDP Innovation Facility uses a 'Work Out Loud' approach; through blogging, learning is shared in real-time on successful (and unsuccessful) projects. The UNDP Innovation Web also shares a conversation channel on YouTube,[63] a newsletter on Innovation for Development and videos from facility-sponsored initiatives.

Similarly, the WFP website features briefs of innovation projects supported by the Innovation Accelerator.[64] The site also features a blog with reviews and articles on innovation.

UNHCR provides updated information on innovation on their website, through a blog with personal opinions and leaning accrued and presented directly from innovators.[65] UNFPA organizes the Innovation Talk Series. These are webinars where all UNFPA staff are invited to participate and in which innovation project focal points (or teams) are invited to share their experiences on the implementation of innovation projects. The Innovation Talk Series act as peer-acknowledgement platforms. As a way to increase visibility of innovation efforts and achievements, all staff at the UN DOCO Innovation Unit includes a result on innovation in their performance management development exercise.

"Culture is about making people feel proud of this process.
Innovation should be about **making people love their jobs again**.
A culture of innovation has to do with people being proud of their role and identity.
That is why the blog is so important in terms of building the culture"

Insights from UN DOCO

*"***Sharing success stories** *of projects that have scaled*
and had impact are critical to **promote engagement** *in innovation*
as well as identifying innovation 'champions' at various levels
in the organization to further promote innovation"

Insight from WFP

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61 'Positive deviants' are people able to reach novel solutions to problems through unusual channels or due to unusual characteristics. Put simply, positive deviants are "people who against all odds are succeeding when everyone else is struggling" (see hbr.org/2010/06/positive-deviance-and-unlikely).

62 unicefstories.org

63 www.youtube.com/channel/UCW0jzd_4QOBUuU9pw2yir9A.

64 innovation.wfp.org

65 www.unhcr.org/uk/innovation.html

Developing capacities to innovate

Most UNIN members have made deliberate efforts to develop capacity to innovate in their organizations. Innovation-related training actions are the most common tool used to develop capacity. Training sessions may be delivered as periodic webinars on specific topics, as long-term courses or as fellowship programmes/workshops held with external partner experts on innovation.

UNHCR has monthly webinars on concrete aspects of innovation and holds an annual core competency-learning programme together with the Innovation Unit and the Global Learning Centre. The programme is open to all staff to participate in. In addition, UNHCR features the aforementioned 12-month Fellowship Programme to nurture the spirit of innovation. Fellowships are open to internal staff and to external affiliates. Innovation Fellows define a challenge unique to their field operations or divisions and develop, test and prototype a solution to the defined challenge. Fellows are also trained in human-centred design, in prototyping principles and are connected to mentorship and funding to further refine their innovative solutions.

In UNICEF, innovation is integrated into manager-level leadership training. UNICEF is considering incorporating design thinking into staff training as well.

UN Women, UN DOCO and UNDP conduct webinars, workshops and courses that focus on leveraging innovation skills. For example, UN DOCO puts together skills development on innovation across Resident Coordinator offices (it recently organized an innovation learning and results workshop in Jordan that brought together 25 Resident Coordinator Offices). UNDP invests in the capacities of innovation champions through innovation skill-building exercises, hands-on learning events in design thinking and games for social change. UNDP has delivered one course on human-centred design (in partnership with Acumen and IDEO) and courses and webinars on innovation with the Harvard Business School. UN Women has trained 10 innovation champions (senior management at regional and country offices) with a programme delivered by Nesta, the UK-based innovation foundation.

UNIN members see innovation both as an attitude and a skill, and always in combination with expertise in technical areas. For UNICEF there are interdisciplinary innovation teams rather than innovation specialists. The innovation attitude — as described by UNICEF — is associated to making enquiries, challenging things, not being complacent with the status quo and a drive to see results.

In UN DOCO, UNDP, UNHCR and WFP, innovation developments are linked to lead technical areas. In UN DOCO, for example, business operation specialists already working in the organization have been assigned to the Business Innovations innovation area, and the communication and knowledge management specialist is in charge of the Voices innovation area (working to innovate ways for people to be more actively involved in decision-making). In UNHCR, innovation labs follow a thematic approach, with each lab (Emergency, Learn, Link and Energy) being linked to a technical division (e.g. the Energy Innovation Lab is (UN Global Pulse) attached to Division of Programme Support and Management). UNDP recruits staff with a strong thematic background and with interest in innovation and innovation skills. The approach builds on the assumption that to deliver on innovation, a high degree of technical and thematic expertise is required. UNDP has recently developed a 'boutique roster' of Social Innovation Experts available to all UNDP staff. These experts have already-tested skills in emerging innovation approaches.

DID YOU KNOW THAT…?

The **UNDP** Competency Framework includes innovation as a core competency. The UNDP Innovation Team is currently working with Nesta, the innovation foundation, on a skills framework that highlights the required skills for new recruitments and staff development. Similarly, in UNICEF, innovation is one of the functional competencies. The Innovation Team is currently working with the Division of Human Resources to make it a core competency.

"A multi-sector, multi-disciplinary approach is key to innovation.
Therefore: **do not only work with UN people**.
Try and work with the private sector"

Insight from UNICEF

"Recruit people with solid technical skills who are **open minded** *and eager to learn.*
Promote **interaction** *between teams of different expertise*
to encourage the cross-pollination of ideas"

Insight from Pulse Lab Jakarta

Sharing knowledge accrued through innovation

UNIN members put efforts into ensuring that knowledge from innovation experiences is shared inside their organizations and across the UN system – a core element to nurture a culture of innovation. UNICEF has a more explicit strategy in terms of knowledge sharing within the organization and beyond. Regular mechanisms used to channel and integrate learning from innovation include blogs, global calls and newsletters and real-time data from Innovation Fund projects.

Real-time data from Innovation Fund projects is intended as a mechanism to integrate learning from innovations. The UNICEF Innovation (Venture) Fund website allows for exploration of individual projects and for tracking the overall portfolio in real-time.[66] More importantly, the Innovation Fund supports clustering problem-solvers around similar, open-source solutions. The innovations are open source and with public domain trademarks, free for everyone to use.

UNDP has a community of practice that brings 600 practitioners from around the world to connect, exchange experiences and inspire others.[67] UNDP also promotes knowledge sharing through annual reports, innovation-specific websites and dedicated blogs. In 2015,

UNDP published more than 70 blog posts to show innovative ongoing initiatives.[68] A number of guides and toolkits on innovation can be found on the UNDP innovation website.[69]

In WFP, knowledge sharing with the outside is related to the innovation website. The site features briefs on the projects supported by the Innovation Accelerator as well as a Blog section sharing information and reviews on key events (e.g. challenges, bootcamps) and articles about innovation in WFP.[70] Internal learning is done through existing knowledge management processes such as internal communication platforms, team retreats, project manager meetings and bootcamps where teams share experiences. Regional- and country-level innovation hubs add to this structure.

Knowledge sharing on innovation is embedded in the DNA of some UNIN members. The institutional role played by OCHA in innovation has been closely associated with knowledge sharing. OCHA has focused on promoting coordination tools, policies and research on innovation, convening spaces for the humanitarian community to reflect on innovation.

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66   unicefinnovationfund.org

67   Additional documentation and resources on the Community of Practice are available in: diytoolkit.org/from-troublemakers-to-transformation-leads

68   Page 34, 2015 Year in Review Report.

69   www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/development-impact/innovation/resources-for-innovation/guides-and-toolkits.html

70   innovation.wfp.org/projects

Knowledge sharing and cross-learning are built-in elements in the design of the Global Pulse Lab structure: "a lab environment provides a space for technologies and analysis techniques to be tried rapidly and iteratively, where teams can learn from each other, and from other labs and contribute knowledge to a larger ecosystem."[71] Further, knowledge-sharing mechanisms include annual reporting (globally and by Pulse Lab), and Pulse Lab websites offer easily downloadable project briefs.

UNHCR experiments with new ways to engage with refugees, the public, partners and UNHCR staff. It does so by using contemporary digital communications tools and platforms. Using social media platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin) to communicate and to share stories is another way for UNHCR to engage with the public and to share knowledge. UN DOCO prioritizes fostering peer-to-peer knowledge. It achieves this through webinars organized around topics related to, for example, data, crowd-sourcing and strategic planning innovations.

Although less systematically, UNAIDS prioritized knowledge sharing in innovation. In 2016, the agency hosted an 'Innovation Marketplace', a one-day activity.

This activity aimed to provide a platform for private-sector companies, NGOs and other organizations working in AIDS to showcase their innovative programmes, new technologies and unique approaches to AIDS; to share new ideas; to foster and create new partnerships; and to explore ways to scale up proven activities.

In UNFPA, knowledge sharing takes place internally through the aforementioned Innovation Talk Series and through the Innovation Hub, an internal web space accessible to all UNFPA staff. The Innovation Hub features an exhaustive inventory of documents related to Innovation Fund projects and procedures. In addition, the UNFPA East and Southern Africa regional innovation network has recently developed an internal web space that features a wide range of information on innovation projects and a repository of documents on design thinking and innovation. In UN Women, knowledge sharing has prioritized the internal sphere (e.g. sharing experiences at the Timeless Women's Conference; publishing a case study on a successful innovation project in Moldova). The UN Women Innovation Unit is planning to start exchanges between offices that have implemented innovation projects and offices that have not yet done so.

10. Insights on Innovation

Insights and organizational lessons depend on the type of agency, on the trajectory of the innovation journey to date and on the innovation approaches adopted. Insights cover topics such as the need to adjust the focus from failure to learning; the importance of linking to innovation ecosystems; partnering with the private sector; planning less and testing more; and a country-level focus; the relevance of complementing innovation funds with the provision of technical capacity; and the influence of innovation mechanisms on organizational culture.

Insights from UNIN members

The comparative tables used to collect data on the 11 organizations that took part in this exercise included an item on insights. Each agency was queried on the main insights and organizational lessons learned since the beginning of their work on innovation. Questions specifically asked about things that did not work and suggestions on 'musts' and 'must nots'. This final chapter presents the insights and suggestions from the responding organizations (insights are presented in agencies' alphabetical order).

UN OICT
Create trusted, collaborative networks

UN OICT points out the importance of creating a trusted collaborative network to support fledgling efforts both inside and outside the organization.

UN Women
Bring in the private sector, include innovation in strategic plans and beware of barriers to gender innovation

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71   www.unglobalpulse.org/pulse-labs

The innovation team at the UN Women Innovation Facility shares three takeaways. The first is that they find it is important to use a funnel approach to innovation, stressing that including innovation in the Strategic Plan will explicitly help mainstream innovation across the organization. The second takeaway is that private-sector partnerships are key to innovation. Third, the UN Women Innovation Facility team identified a number of barriers to innovation in the gender thematic area.

Barriers to innovation in the gender thematic area include "the limited market for innovations that work for women; the lack of integration of gender throughout the innovation cycle; the under-representation of women as innovators; and the need for specific innovation and technology solutions to meet the needs of women"
– UN Women team

UN DOCO
Support with technical capacity is as important as financial support

The Knowledge and Innovation Team at UN DOCO started with the assumption that UNCT and resident coordinator offices would not need much support from UN DOCO at headquarters. Practice, though, has proven that although this was at times the case, there was a need to develop capacity and skills on environment scanning (i.e. examining what is already available in the ecosystem and how can it be used). UN DOCO incorporated this in its 2017 call for proposals. There is now a requirement to explain the type of scanning conducted prior to developing a proposal. Another, similar, insight is the need to devote more UN DOCO Facility time to assist country offices in developing proposals; providing not only funds but also technical assistance to develop proposals, which often implies a process of dialogue with the country.

UNDP
It is about learning rather than about failure

UNDP shares meaningful insights on how to deal with failure.[72]

"Innovation involves calculated risks. Some ideas will not yield results. But labelling these as 'failures' discourages open discussion about what has not worked, and why. This is an impediment to learning, which is an integral part of success" **– UNDP team**

The UNDP innovation team openly shared that "we tried sourcing failure stories but failed. We changed course and focus on peer-learning sessions, facilitated by Regional Leads, not by headquarters." The team concludes that the insight is to:

Move away from a focus on failure and focus instead on learning **– UNDP team**

Figure 11. Other UNDP Insights on Approaches to Innovation

Be deliberate on capturing learning. Separating learning from reporting is not an easy task. Qualitative insights of what people implementing innovation projects learn are not easy to capture, yet they are of high value.
Put outcomes at the centre of the narrative. In the beginning, UNDP focused on human-centred design and rapid prototyping. This resulted in one-off outcome events without follow-up or tracking from NGOs. The lesson is to put the narrative on the outcome to be achieved (rather than the narrative on the solution) on paper from the outset; planning with outcomes at the centre rather planning with solutions (products/services) at the centre.
Mainstreaming is a key challenge. There are innovation champions in the organization that test new approaches. The issue is how to bring these approaches back to the organization and mainstream them. This requires that the Innovation Team has a clear, explicit mandate. This mandate should be given by senior management and communicated across the organization.

UN Global Pulse - Pulse Lab Jakarta
Get better at filtering ideas

Pulse Lab Jakarta shares, as a main insight, the importance of having a clear filtering process for ideas to embark on.

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72   Taken from: www.devex.com/news/6-ways-to-innovate-for-development-in-2015-and-beyond-86164

The team at Pulse Lab Jakarta recognized that:

> *"Challenges generate high levels of excitement that sometimes lead to solutions that do not get anywhere: The learning is that it is very important to get better at filtering new ideas"*
> **– Pulse Lab Jakarta team**

UNICEF
Plan less, test more, learn fast and focus at the country level

Based on its long-standing experience in innovation, the UNICEF innovation team points out that although planning is needed, it may not be of the essence when working on innovation.

> *"Do not plan too much. Go, do and iterate. Try in one or two countries, see what happens and if it works, take it to scale"* **– UNICEF team**

A second insight points at the importance of fast-learning mechanisms:

> *"Rather than building a big innovation plan, it is advisable to build fast learning mechanisms to learn as you work"* **– UNICEF team**

Another UNICEF insight is the need to focus on countries (rather than at headquarters), given that:

> *"When it comes to innovation, things to show and share occur at country level rather than in headquarters" – UNICEF team*

The UNICEF innovation team also shares that having a committed Executive Director is a key asset, as it implies that innovation ideas may not be killed too soon. Likewise, they emphasize that the drive for innovation should be spread across the organization (there are lots of people with an open mind to innovate), rather than concentrated at the senior management level. The innovation team at UNICEF concludes that the innovation champion concept adopted by UNDP seems to be a suitable option to promote an organization-wide innovation culture.

UNFPA
Link with the ecosystem and invest in human resources

The Innovation Initiative's two-year journey brought three main insights to UNFPA. First, that interacting with the innovation ecosystem is crucial to effectively turn ideas into products, services and improved business processes that fit contextual needs. This entails greater emphasis on innovation-focused partnerships with the private sector, UN sister agencies, academia and civil society organizations. The second insight is the need to assign more dedicated human resources to innovation. Volunteer-based schemes work, but there are limits to what can be achieved. Fully integrating innovation as a corporate priority requires a dedicated innovation team (both in headquarters and the regions). The third insight relates to the fact that the UNFPA Innovation Fund's calls for proposals proved to be a good approach to creating a momentum for innovation. Calls open to all staff made a difference in positioning innovation in the organization's agenda.

WFP
Innovation mechanisms alter innovation culture

The WFP innovation team points out that Innovation Accelerator activities have led to a noticeable change in innovation culture, with an increase in the number of innovation projects underway. As an additional lesson learned, the WFP team recognized that as the Accelerator consolidates, it has been important to make regular adjustments based on the diversity of projects and to continuously validate innovations against the WFP operational context.

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United Nations Population Fund

Evaluation Office

605 Third Avenue

New York, NY 10158 U.S.A.

e-mail: evaluation.office@unfpa.org

www.unfpa.org/evaluation