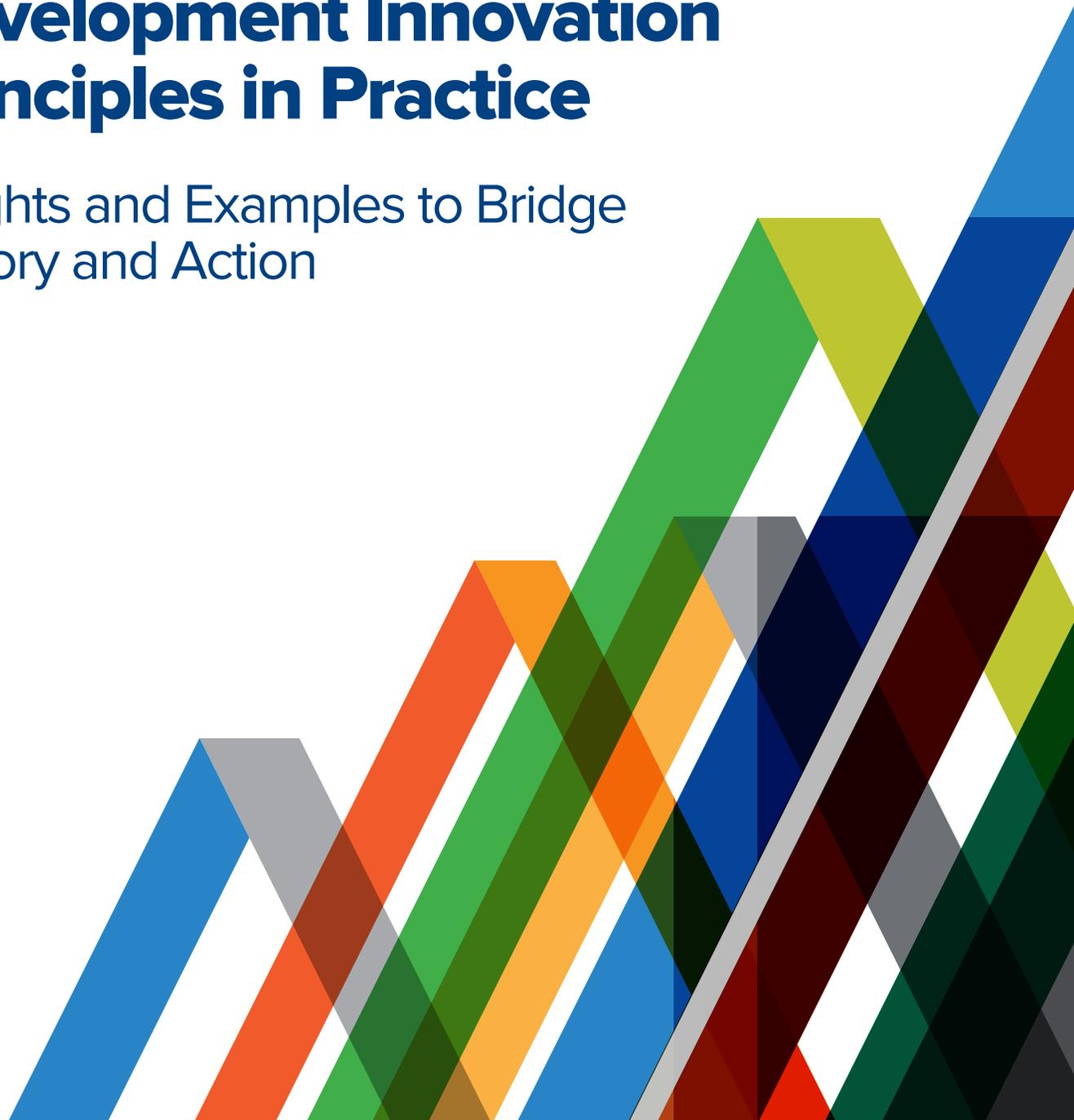


Development Innovation Principles in Practice

Insights and Examples to Bridge Theory and Action



**The
International
Development
Innovation
Alliance (IDIA)**



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.



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This document presents insights and examples of development innovation principles in practice that have been collected by IDIA members, through a multi-disciplinary and collaborative process. It does not represent the official policies, approaches or opinions of any single contributing agency or IDIA member, nor reflect their institutional endorsement or implementation of the principles and approaches contained herein.

IDIA and the G7: Development Innovation Principles in Practice

The importance of principles for development innovation

Over the next 30 years, the global community has an extraordinary opportunity to eradicate extreme poverty. However, this ambition as outlined in Agenda 2030 will not succeed with business-as-usual approaches. We need path-breaking improvements to service delivery, products and policies and to new partnerships and funding modalities, including public-private cooperation. Innovation is critical for delivering sustained, scalable solutions to the world's complex problems. Governments, the private sector, civil society, academia, development institutions, and donors must work together more and better than ever before — crossing traditional boundaries — to discover, fund, and scale new solutions and tap the energy of innovation needed to reduce poverty at scale.

Recognizing the importance of innovation for the international development community to achieve its global ambitions, members of the [International Development Innovation Alliance](#) (IDIA) articulated and committed to six principles for facilitating innovation in international

development in a 2015 [Call for Innovation](#). In June 2018, Development Ministers from each of the G7 member countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States) then endorsed the [Whistler Principles](#) to guide and accelerate innovation for development impact, which built on those in IDIA's 2015 Call and added a greater focus on inclusiveness and gender.

Bridging theory and action

While shared principles are always an important mark of consensus for development actors, impact depends upon their translation into practice. To help development leaders and practitioners understand what this looks like, IDIA has created the *Development Innovation Principles in Practice* series, which looks at how the eight Whistler principles adopted by the G7 Development Ministers are brought to life across a range of sectors and geographies, drawing from a shared repository of over 60 innovation stories contributed by IDIA member agencies. Questions for reflection, resources and tools for practitioners looking to integrate the principles into their own practice are also included.

About the International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)

International development agencies are increasingly challenged by the need to achieve more with limited or reduced resources. Achieving greater impact more quickly requires the international development community to commit to doing things differently, and to find new ways of working together. In response to this challenge, some of the world's leading development innovation funders came together in early 2015 to form **The International Development Innovation Alliance (IDIA)** — a collaborative platform with the shared goal of “*actively promoting and advancing innovation as a means to help achieve sustainable development.*” To learn more, visit www.idiainnovation.org.

What is innovation?

IDIA defines innovation in an inclusive manner as “a new solution with the transformative ability to accelerate impact.” In this way, innovation can be fueled by science and technology, can entail improved ways of working with new and diverse partners, or can involve new social and business models or policy, creative financing mechanisms, or path-breaking improvements in delivering essential services and products.

Promote inclusive innovation

Principle 1. Promote inclusive innovation, with a focus on supporting the poorest and most vulnerable to have lasting development impact. Gender analysis is valuable in this regard. Women and adolescent girls, including those with disabilities, should play a decisive role in the design, testing, learning and adoption of innovative solutions, and should be engaged as both recipients of innovation and by supporting them with tools and resources as innovators.

Why is this important?

Innovation has the potential to address a number of development challenges, but far too often, new technologies, approaches, and solutions are not designed to meet the needs of the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. **Historically**, innovation has aimed at producing goods and services for middle- and high-income consumers and improving processes of formal producers. But when focused only on middle- and high-income markets and economic, rather than social, development needs, innovation runs the risk of perpetuating and exacerbating systemic inequalities and social exclusion. Current trajectories suggest that many of the sustainable development goal targets will not be met by 2030. Making progress on gender equality, disability inclusion, and inclusion of marginalized groups increase the likelihood of reaching all other SDG targets. For these reasons, inclusion is fundamental in order for innovation to fulfill its potential reaching the SDGs. New approaches, products, voices, and perspectives — especially those of women, girls, the disabled, and marginalized minorities — are needed for innovation that successfully addresses inequality and exclusion.

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

Disability is correlated with extreme poverty, with people with disabilities often comprising the poorest populations in the poorest regions. The global community has a long way to go to provide the needed resources, attention

and leadership to ensure that the basic needs — including housing, health care, education, employment, and transport — of people with disabilities are met, and that they are empowered to better their own lives and societies. In addition, many obstacles remain on the road to gender equality, defined as what is achieved when people of all genders have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society — as well as to responsiveness to the needs of marginalized groups. These obstacles, such as discriminatory norms, traditional hierarchies, unconscious biases and other institutional structures and social arrangements, are deeply ingrained, and threaten to stymie the potential of innovations. Addressing them within an innovation context often requires disrupting and deconstructing structures or social arrangements, such as hierarchies, power structures, practices, and policies — and sometimes even traditional gender or disability mainstreaming approaches themselves. Applying an inclusive lens to innovation requires intentionally bringing gender, accessibility, and inclusion considerations into processes used to source, design, implement and evaluate innovations, and recognizing the additional influencing factors that may be operating within the larger innovation ecosystem. Thinking about the broader ecosystem is essential because successfully scaling innovation is not possible without a wide range of support (including technical, financial and political support) from local, national and sometimes international entities. While scaling can at times be slower when taking inclusion into account, the result is often more sustainable and equitable in the long run.

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we connect geographically isolated African smallholder farmers to share information and knowledge to improve their farming practices?



Harnessing farmers' willingness to share knowledge freely and amplifying information that they themselves find useful, the farm.ink chatbot allows farmers to share peer-to-peer knowledge and connect with each other and with crop buyers. Farm.ink's Africa Farmers Club (AFC) has over 100,000 members and has generated over 150,000 posts and comments, but as its user base grew, so did its gender gap. The reason for the growing disparity was that the service was marketed primarily through online ads which, due to the gender gap in smartphone usage, were more likely to be seen by men than women. Recognizing that including women's voices was essential for the quality and relevance of farm.ink to a broad potential user base, the farm.ink team set out to address the gender gap in their user base. The team designed a Facebook campaign targeted specifically at the female demographic highlighting female farmers' stories. The team A/B tested a range of

images and messaging to understand what really worked in drawing more female users to the service. Within a week the farm.ink team was able to grow the share of female users from 30% of the total base to 49%. Analyzing user data, farm.ink also found insights that bolstered their business case for engaging women farmers. Contrary to widely held assumptions, the team found that female users were actually slightly more likely to create new content than their male counterparts. The analysis also showed that content created by women received a higher average rating from other users than content created by men. By using an iterative and data-driven approach, farm.ink helps African farmers access information to improve their farming practices, and by embracing inclusive innovation, it ensures that female users access and benefit from the same information and resources

as their male counterparts. Visit [farm.ink's website](#) and Medium [blogs](#) for more.



THE CHALLENGE:

How can we identify spaces in the community that are accessible for people with disabilities?



A staggering 15% of the world's population, or a billion people around the globe, live with disabilities. Matcheli, an online mapping app and platform providing user-generated, crowdsourced, information on accessible spaces for disabled people, demonstrates the power of innovating with and harnessing the collective knowledge of this often-ignored population. Working in Armenia alongside the Armenian Camp NGO, UNDP Armenia recruited community members to participate in the first in a series of mapathons, this time in Yerevan, where 50% of the country's population resides, to rethink accessibility. The Mapathon enlisted students and community members to identify and plot accessible spaces and spots around the city by taking a photo of any wheelchair-friendly place, tagging the location and describing the accessibility in a few words. By compiling this crowdsourced information — including over

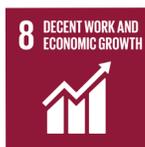
500 accessible spaces in Yerevan alone — on a user-friendly map, Matcheli increases the exposure of people living with disabilities to accessibility information, which helps them plan ahead to navigate everyday life and ultimately increases the accessibility and inclusiveness of the city for the disabled population. Matcheli's reach has also extended to include more cities and mapathons across Armenia. An innovative crowdsourcing and technology-enabled solution has become a valuable resource for an under-served population. Learn more via this Medium [blog](#).



Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: **dot.** DIGITAL OPPORTUNITY TRUST

How can we empower young women and men to secure the economic future of Africa and the Middle East?



Economic systems in Africa and the Middle East face slow job creation and skills gaps. Inequality of opportunity and access to resources, especially

for women, compounds these challenges. In partnership with Global Affairs Canada, the Digital Opportunity Trust (DOT) uses economic empowerment programming to support over 46,000 young women and men to build entrepreneurial and job skills, and to use technology to increase their incomes and employment opportunities. DOT programs cultivate social innovation mindsets among youth to drive community change, and incorporate digital peer-to-peer platforms connecting underserved youth on their social innovation journeys. A youth-led program expansion model empowers young women and men to deliver DOT programming in their own countries. Importantly, DOT's work integrates a comprehensive gender equality strategy to break the status quo of women and girls' limited access to

ICT and entrepreneurship training. It provides opportunities for women and girls to present their innovative ideas to networks of women mentors, and seeks to understand what motivates and hinders women's use of digital tools and technology to narrow the gender digital divide. Seventy to eighty percent of young men and women report a high level of employment and entrepreneurship skills as a result of participating in DOT's programs, citing improvements in their abilities to use technology in the growth of businesses, managing finances, and in assessing their skills against market opportunities. This has translated into improved livelihoods: over a third of DOT youth have launched or grown a business. By integrating a feminist approach across all phases of programming, DOT's work strengthens gender equality to ensure women and girls not only benefit from innovation, but also are equipped to innovate for themselves

and their communities. To learn more, visit DOT's [website](#).



THE CHALLENGE: **U-Report** VOICE MATTERS

How can we empower girls to access free, reliable, and confidential information on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and HIV/AIDS?



U-Report is a messaging program designed to engage communities and address issues affecting adolescents and youth. U-Report uses SMS

and digital channels to collect information to improve policy and programs and provide information, solutions and peer counselling on SRH and HIV AIDs, with over 6 million young people using U-Report to voice their opinions. In Pakistan, 49% of female users reported that they had no knowledge of menstruation prior to their first period. In response, U-Report worked with girls and boys to launch the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Innovation Challenge, calling upon youth themselves to design innovative solutions to menstrual health and hygiene issues. Seven winners

received expert guidance and seed funding to build, pilot, and scale their ideas, including a digital MHM chatbot, called Chutki, that provides real-time, personalized responses to girls' questions. It has already reached 75,000 adolescent girls in Nigeria, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Cote d'Ivoire, and is being scaled to other countries. In addition to empowering young people as innovators, the U-Report team is also working to improve the platform's responsiveness to girls' needs and to strengthen gender equality. U-Report had over 110,000 active Mozambican users by 2017, but a ratio of 60% boys to 40% girls. To address this, the team used "word-of-mouth" references through Girl-to-Girl (G2G) subscriptions to encourage and reward existing girl users for inviting other girls to join the service. In only 72 hours, G2G subscriptions reduced the gender gap from 20% to 12%, demonstrating the importance of putting girls and boys at the center of design for gender equality. U-Report has strengthened sectoral linkages, built a network of information-sharing and learning, and designed girl-centered communication and solutions to empower girls all over the world. Visit UNICEF's stories on U-Report in [Pakistan](#), [Mozambique](#), and [Cote d'Ivoire](#) to learn more.

This principle was informed by IDIA's [Call for Innovation](#).
For more details on this and other development innovation principles
in action, please visit www.idiainnovation.org.

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Additional resources

Development actors are increasingly recognizing the importance of gender and disability inclusion to meet the goals of the 2030 Agenda. Below is a sampling of articles, tools and resources that begin to address the nexus of disability inclusion and innovation, and gender and innovation.

Disability inclusion

- [Global call to action for disability inclusion](#) [Devex Opinion]
- [The technology sector could make or break disability inclusion](#) [Devex Article]
- [Leading by example in disability-inclusive development](#) [Devex Article]
- [World Bank Group commitments on disability-inclusive development](#) [World Bank Brief]
- [Agency, ability, access: Co-designing for inclusion](#) [Medium / UNDP Article]
- [Disability-inclusive infrastructure programmes](#) [Medium / DFID Article]
- [Diversity as a source of innovation: the case for inclusive design](#) [Medium / Microsoft Article]
- [Inclusive Innovation for Development: Meeting the Demands of Justice through Public Action](#) [Book]
- [Innovation Policies for Inclusive Development: Scaling up inclusive innovations](#) [OECD Booklet]
- [Inclusive innovation processes – experiences from Uganda and Tanzania](#) [Research Article]

Gender

- [Toward Bridging Gender Equality & Innovation](#) [IDIA Insights Paper]
- [Feminist International Assistance Policy](#) [Government of Canada Policy]
- [Why troublemakers should work together: Ten thoughts on innovation and gender equality](#) [UNDP Blog]
- [A conceptual model of women and girls' empowerment](#) [Gates Foundation Report]
- [Gender Toolbox](#) [Sida Toolkit]
- [Gender Portal and Tools](#) [Grand Challenges Canada]
- [Compilation of Notes on Gender Tools and Resources](#) [Gates Foundation Toolkit]

- [Mapping the innovation terrain for gender equality](#) [SSIR Article]
- [SIDA Gender Analysis & UNDP How to conduct a gender analysis](#) [Tools]
- [USAID Gender Guide – M&E](#) [USAID Tool]
- [Africa Gender Innovation Lab](#) [World Bank Website]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations involved in scaling.

- ✓ Does my team include gender balance, a diversity of perspectives, and gender equality or disability inclusion expertise? Is there capacity and accountability to address gender equality and disability inclusion at design, piloting, iteration, evaluation and scaling stages to achieve outcomes?
- ✓ Does the development innovation ecosystem foster women as entrepreneurs? Are biases against women founders proactively identified, addressed, and removed to facilitate access to finance?
- ✓ How does an innovation impact gender equality, disability inclusion, or other marginalized groups? How might gender equality and disability inclusion impact the success or sustainability of an innovation?
- ✓ What institutional factors might put gender equality or disability inclusion at risk? How can these factors be mitigated to ensure that the most vulnerable are included and reached? What other opportunities exist to integrate gender and inclusion considerations into policy frameworks, regulatory architecture, institutional norms and ways of working?
- ✓ How can gender equality or inclusive innovation priorities be incorporated and reflected in investment processes and mechanisms?



Invest in locally-driven solutions

Principle 2. Invest in locally-driven solutions and support and encourage local innovators and their partners in developing countries, including by sharing talent and resources from global networks with them.

Why is this important?

With good reason, “context matters” has become a familiar refrain in discourse about development effectiveness; designing and implementing effective innovations requires consideration of the existing environment. Supporting innovators in emerging countries matters because proximity to and a thorough understanding of the challenge is critical for designing better solutions. Investing locally and ceding control over innovation decision-making helps ensure that solutions fully respond to contextual challenges, which in turn helps position them to maximize impact. It also helps promote sustainability by supporting individuals and communities to solve their own problems and be the long-term owners of these solutions.

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

[Recent research](#) on [startup investment in East Africa](#) found that 90% of funded ventures had founders or co-founders from America or Europe, which points to the reality that impact investors and development agency purse-string holders are not immune to [unconscious biases](#). “[Like-me](#)” and other biases can divert financial support to innovators and social entrepreneurs who look and talk like their

investors from the Global North. Since agency decision-makers in the Global North have limited first-hand exposure to development challenges, it is even more important that they “fund to facilitate, not to execute,” as one practitioner put it. This implies mitigating biases and, at times, shifting ownership and decision-making power to actors who have a better understanding of the local context.

Another challenging factor is the often politically-driven reporting requirements and general risk aversion of Northern institutions that fund innovation, which often results in the use of protocols and processes that advantage innovators who have perfected donor monitoring and evaluation requirements and who have financial management systems linked to data that can be verified in the donor’s own country. Are a whole population of innovators – the ‘unusual’ suspects – falling through the gaps here?

Finally, high variability of key factors in an environment, including formal and informal institutions, relationships, power and politics can deter funders and innovators alike from making early investments of time and resources required to fully understand the problem they wish to solve. For all of these reasons, investing in locally-driven solutions is easier said than done but also more important than ever.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we use technology to deliver foundational education to out-of-school children?

can't wait to
LEARN



Can't Wait to Learn (CWTL) is a great example of an education innovation that reflects the local realities of children's lives in Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Uganda. Refugee and vulnerable children who lack regular access to

education can learn by playing on tablet computers loaded with educational games that contain instruction, practice, and a learning management system. The game's designs and graphics are custom-made by incorporating inputs from children's own drawings, life stories, and feedback to tailor the game world to look similar to the real world that children experience every day. As a result, children can focus their mental energy on building math and literacy skills, rather than on understanding a new game world that looks different from their own. This locally-driven approach to designing the graphical game world enables children who

play the game to learn more, faster. Children using CWTL learn significantly from the game, with those who know the least demonstrating biggest gains; trials showed 30-point learning gains in mathematics scores. The program also has positive effects on self-esteem and motivation and is equally engaging for girls and boys. To learn more about Can't Wait to Learn, visit the [Global Innovation Exchange](#), read the [Journeys to Scale](#) case study, and check out the War Child Holland [website](#) for more information.



THE CHALLENGE:

How can women in extreme poverty access mainstream finance to generate more stable income and forge a pathway out of poverty?



An innovator's inspiration is often a problem that she or he has personally experienced, creating a deep understanding of the challenge that leads

to more targeted and effective solutions. Growing up in poverty as a child, and working with BRAC on women's empowerment, Chandra Shekhar Ghosh knew many women had to resort to begging, due to their illiteracy, lack of access to loans, and exploitation by money lenders. Mainstream microfinance services did not reach these women, but Ghosh believed that for them to stand on their feet, they needed assets and mentorship to start income-generating businesses. In response, he created Bandhan Konnagar, a nonprofit with a suite of holistic development programs, to provide starter assets and support to women in extreme poverty. Bandhan Konnagar's Targeting the Hardcore Poor program uses a 24-month graduation model to support extremely poor women with a productive asset

that generates income and builds their self-confidence to pursue further financial services for entrepreneurship. It also mobilizes community knowledge and support, enlisting village communities to select the most vulnerable women to participate in the program. Bandhan Konnagar helps participants achieve basic literacy and identify enterprises to pursue, providing them with training specific to their businesses and serving them in a highly personalized and efficient manner. The combination of a productive asset with hands-on mentorship is powerful. Bandhan Konnagar provides support until participants' enterprises become income-generating, and having strengthened their basic assets, supports them to graduate to regular microfinance programs, traditional financial services, and sustainable livelihoods. Over the course of 10 years, Bandhan Konnagar's Targeting the Hardcore Poor program has



reached more than 55,000 beneficiaries in nine states of India. Learn more on the program's [website](#), [here](#), [here](#), and on the [Global Innovation Exchange](#).

Examples of this principle in practice

2

THE CHALLENGE: How can we reduce the economic insecurity of farmers?



Kola Masha's combination of global training and local insight helped him establish [Babban Gona](#), an end-to-end smallholder farm services company in Nigeria. Masha's experience working for global multinationals, combined with his understanding of Nigeria's economic insecurity and insurgency challenges, informed the creation of a franchise system to turn subsistence farmers into commercial ones and create jobs and incentives for young people to stay on their land. Babban Gona's operations are concentrated in Kaduna State in northern Nigeria, where Masha moved in 2012 to better understand the region's challenges and begin recruiting farmers. The program's end-to-end support package for farmers includes management and commercial farming training, the formation of small

farmer co-operatives, loans of up to \$1,000 for a year's seeds and fertilizer, visits from supervisors, and harvest-time marketing services. Babban Gona has doubled the yields of 13,500 farmers and raised their incomes to 2.3 times the national average. Learn more on Babban Gona's [website](#) and on the [Global Innovation Exchange](#).



THE CHALLENGE: How can we increase the resilience of communities facing disaster, conflict and climate change?



The [ResilientAfrica Network \(RAN\)](#) brings 100,000 African scholars together with community members to develop their own vision of resilience and innovative solutions to achieve it. Established in 2012, the network seeks new and transformative methods to combat long-standing challenges, including natural disaster, conflict, chronic illness and rapid urbanization. RAN has engaged 16 universities throughout Africa to analyze the drivers of resilience and carry out community consultations to find solutions to pressing challenges. Engaging with local communities enables RAN to arrive at practical, sustainable, and effective solutions, which include: a telephone-radio to bring communities together to share local traders' classifieds, public health information, and agricultural advice; a pull-push method of crop planting to naturally deter weeds and pests and minimize crop loss; a food dryer to decrease crop loss after harvest; and deliberative polling to understand community needs and priorities and inform government action.



As RAN's leader, Dr. William Bazeyo, puts it, the network can “design community-originated innovation that is acceptable, usable, affordable and, most importantly, builds or strengthens resilience.” To learn more, visit the [network's website](#) and check out this [article](#) on RAN.

This principle was informed by IDIA's [Call for Innovation](#).

For more details on this and other development innovation principles in action, please visit www.idiainnovation.org.

2

Additional resources

One useful approach for investing in locally-driven solutions is human-centered design (HCD), which can strengthen contextual and user needs considerations and improve design and implementation of innovations. Human-centered design is a way of thinking that places the people who will benefit and other important stakeholders at the center of the design and implementation process.

Not only do development funders and decision-makers need greater awareness of biases that may affect their investments, but they also need to walk the talk in terms of the diversity of perspectives represented in their own organizations and among staff members. Below are practical resources for incorporating human-centered design principles in development innovation work, as well as resources and questions that can help development decision-makers address biases and identify factors that may work against investing in locally-driven solutions.

- [Using human-centred design at DFID](#) [Development Impact & You (DIY) Blog]
- [A human-centered approach to design for development](#) [Devex Article]
- [Prototyping human-centered policies for children in Nicaragua](#) [UNICEF Blog]
- [Gates Foundation and USAID team up to bring design to health](#) [Devex Article]
- [Design for Health](#) [Gates Foundation & USAID Toolkit]
- [Human Centered Design Toolkit](#) [IDEO Toolkit]
- [4 principles of human-centered design to improve data uptake](#) [R4D Blog]
- [A guide to busting unconscious bias](#) [Devex Article]
- [Realizing Diversity, Accelerating Impact: State of Diversity in Global Social Impact](#) [Quantum Impact Report]
- [Closing the gender leadership gap in development](#) [Devex Opinion]

- [When it comes to diversity, don't assume — assess](#) [Chemonics Blog]
- [Development should include everyone](#) [Forbes Article]
- [The Diversity Forum](#) [Website]
- [Venture funding for social impact with Alix Zwane](#) [Aidpreneur Podcast]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations involved in scaling.

- ✓ How diverse is the staff of my innovation team? What perspectives do they bring to their work? What perspectives are not represented here?
- ✓ How do I involve input from local stakeholders in my decision-making? Can I adjust my institution's investment mechanisms to be entrepreneur-led instead of funder strategy-driven?
- ✓ Are any of our investment criteria more prone to bias than others and/or not necessary for identifying innovations with potential? (e.g. innovator's level of education)
- ✓ What else can I do to ensure that the investments I make support initiatives that are adequately grounded in context and have potential for long-term local ownership?



Take intelligent risks

Principle 3. Take intelligent risks by experimenting and using rigorous data, while ensuring that we do no harm, and investing more boldly once initial steps yield stronger evidence of the demonstrated impact and financial viability through proof-of-concept.

Why is this important?

To make progress against the scale and ambition of the 2030 Development Agenda, new solutions are needed to accelerate progress. Development actors must increasingly embrace risk as they pursue new ways of working and experiment with new approaches and products. With risk-taking comes the possibility of failure. Using data to inform an innovation's design, especially during its early stages, can point innovators in the direction of better design choices and identify questions they will need to answer to be viable at scale. Similarly, using initial evidence to reduce uncertainty can also help development funders minimize the risks of failure in making early-stage investments in innovations. Experimentation and iteration can help innovators and funders to understand and mitigate an innovation's unknowns, risks, and uncertainties before scaling. Taking risks, but doing so intelligently, will be a crucial tool in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

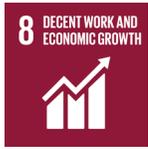
What to consider when putting this principle into practice

Though necessary for innovation, risk-taking implies that not every dollar spent will have a direct impact, a reality that development agencies can find difficult to accept. Despite their public emphasis on innovation, development agencies often have an underlying culture that is risk-averse. As [Andrew Natsios pointed out in 2010](#), as a result of their political authorizing environment, aid agencies

are under constant pressure to reduce risk and increase effectiveness, to the point where it can undermine impact and compromise good practice. While rigorously measuring results to demonstrate effectiveness and impact has its uses, especially as a tool to verify outcomes and unlock additional financing for innovations on their way to scale, in recent years, agencies' emphasis on metrics may have further entrenched risk-aversion. When staff know that their performance will be judged against preset, quantifiable indicators, [they do not have incentives to pursue risky programs](#), even when high risk is matched with potentially high rewards and achievement of substantial impact. But there are a number of ways that development agencies can reduce or mitigate risks without abandoning risk-taking completely. Development actors can encourage intelligent risk-taking by making clear internally which types of risks are encouraged (such as "[discovery risk](#)" — identifying or testing new solutions) and which are not (such as compliance risks), by limiting the size and duration of risks and making small bets on early-stage innovations, and by setting out [gated phases](#) or stages with clear criteria for impact and scale in order to scale up financial support to innovations. Agencies can also increase tolerance for risk-taking by using a portfolio approach to risk that balances more and less risky investments against each other. The four examples below illustrate how development innovators and funders have worked together to understand and take intelligent risks, mitigate unnecessary ones, and achieve impact.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: **bioensure™** How can we increase the survival rate of crops in extreme weather conditions?



Adaptive Symbiotic Technologies (AST) developed a liquid spray to coat seeds in helpful fungi that aid plant growth in high temperatures

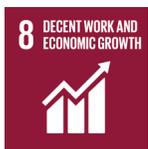
and reduce the amount of water and nutrients that plants need. The spray inoculates plants from drought and heat waves, giving it the potential to help farmers around the world grow food in extreme conditions. After successfully testing the spray, called BioEnsure, with commercial partners in the United States, AST turned attention to expanding into India, where farmers desperately need help adapting to droughts. Bringing BioEnsure into a new environment in India posed risks, especially in navigating the country's complex bureaucracy to gain government approval of BioEnsure. Another new challenge was getting the seed treatment to farmers in light of limited seed distribution infrastructure in rural India. AST raised just under \$6 million from investors and also received support from Securing Water For Food (SWFF), a water-agricultural grant and

acceleration program at USAID. With these resources, AST hired a consultant who navigated the Indian regulatory maze to obtain approval, and initiated research to develop low-cost seed treaters to use in applying BioEnsure to seeds locally. Having worked with women farmers in low-income areas before, SWFF helped AST launch an empowerment program to teach women in farming villages how to operate the seed treaters and start their own businesses as agricultural distributors. AST now sells BioEnsure directly to these women, who treat the seeds and sell them in their communities. This approach both provides good-paying work for entrepreneurial women and expands the use of BioEnsure to hard-to-reach smaller farms. Taking a risk to bring BioEnsure to India has paid off; farmers using treated seeds have seen a 55% increase in mung bean crops and 30% increase in pearl millet crops, or the equivalent of an



extra full year's worth of income. Learn more on AST's [website](#) and Securing Water for Food's [website](#) and [blog](#).

THE CHALLENGE: **Babban Gona** How can we reduce the economic insecurity of farmers?



In Northern Nigeria, prevalent threats of terrorism prevent investment, yet 77% of the population live on \$1 a day. To meet this economic challenge, [Babban Gona](#) provides end-to-end services to smallholder farmers

to help them become profitable. To support Babban Gona's work to help young people stay on their land and create more jobs, Global Innovation Fund (GIF) invested \$2.5 million, in the form of an outcome-based subordinated convertible loan, in the company. Unlike traditional debt, by tying the loan's interest rate to the amount of total farmer income generated during the loan's life, this instrument minimizes financial risk for GIF while incentivizing Babban Gona to maximize its impact. GIF also coupled the loan with a grant to fund a randomized controlled trial (RCT) to verify the impact created by Babban Gona. GIF's support through the structure of the loan-plus-grant deal is tied to Babban

Gona's outcomes, as verified by the RCT -- a good example of using rigorous methods for innovative financing at a later stage of the scaling process. Despite the challenging operating environment, Babban Gona has been able to generate significant positive impact by increasing the net income of over 20,000 smallholder farmers by an average of \$1500. Learn more on Babban Gona's [website](#) and on the [Global Innovation Exchange](#).



Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: **can't wait to LEARN** How can we deliver effective education to out-of-school children?



Through [Can't Wait to Learn \(CWTL\)](#), refugee and vulnerable children who lack regular access to education can learn literacy and math skills by playing educational games on tablets that contain instruction, practice, and a learning management system. The CWTL game uses child-centered design and co-creation with children to create the game world, while following the national curriculum. Identifying, understanding and mitigating risks by using evidence has been a core tenet of CWTL's approach from the start. The team '[stage-gated](#)' research on the program, only growing it once the most pressing risks to success had been successfully addressed. CWTL conducted a preliminary pilot with 66 children over six weeks to understand whether the program was able to overcome common e-learning challenges before implementing it more widely. With positive initial results, including 30-point learning gains in mathematics, the team moved on to a second pilot to test two key issues: whether children's motivation to learn

via tablets could be sustained over time, and whether the program would be able to teach complex math concepts. It also included research on the psychosocial effects of the intervention. The CWTL team also conducted technology usage research to understand the access, functionality, and maintenance of the program's hardware, and undertook cost modeling and value-for-money exercises to project out cost-effectiveness at scale. They found the program to have positive effects on academic outcomes, self-esteem, and motivation. Intelligent risk-taking and use of evidence will continue to play an important role in Can't Wait to Learn as the team scales up the program in Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, and Uganda. Further research results for studies in Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan will be published in 2019. To learn more about Can't Wait to Learn, visit the [Global Innovation Exchange](#), read the [Journeys to Scale](#) case study, and check out the War Child Holland [website](#) for more information.



THE CHALLENGE: **ZOLA ELECTRIC** How can we provide sustainable electricity services to off-grid communities?



By developing a radically affordable solar leasing service, Zola Electric is scaling quickly to provide solar energy to people with limited or no access to the national grid in Tanzania, one of the least electrified countries in Africa. Compared to other sources of energy such as kerosene or candles, Zola Electric's solar energy is cleaner, more renewable, more sustainable, and more cost-effective, which contributes to the innovation's scalability. When Zola was at an early stage in its development, with limited evidence of impact, USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) program took a calculated risk to invest in it, providing more funding only as the program gathered more evidence of impact. The increase in venture funding from DIV over time helped demonstrate the viability and scalability of Zola's approach, allowing the company to access additional financing and expand its coverage and accelerating its



progress toward the goal of reaching 1,000,000 households by 2017. By early 2016, Zola's service had reached 100,000 households and was available in 14 regions throughout Tanzania, and it continues to add 10,000 new homes a month. Leveraging three rounds of initial investment from DIV, Zola Electric has raised \$95 million in follow-on capital and is well on its way to fulfilling its mission of lighting up Africa. For more information, visit the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) and this [article](#).

This principle was informed by IDIA's [Call for Innovation](#).

For more details on this and other development innovation principles in action, please visit www.idiainnovation.org.

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Additional resources

The resources below include blogs, articles, and tools that capture approaches and ideas to help aid agencies and development actors take intelligent risks, including innovation prototyping, lean testing, adaptive management and learning, and more.

- [How to take the right risks in international development](#) [DevPolicy Blog]
- [Innovation: managing risk, not avoiding it](#) [UK Government Office for Science Report]
- [Take smart risks: The Omidyars' belief in innovation means every dollar may not have impact](#) [Bridgespan Video]
- [Risk management](#) [Open Road Alliance Toolkit]
- [Embracing philanthropy's risky business](#) [SSIR Article]
- [What makes a risk a "smart risk"?](#) [The Whitman Institute Book Review]
- [5 ways to encourage smart risk-taking](#) [Inc. Article]
- [To increase innovation: help your team take smarter risks](#) [Forbes Article]
- [Trying to deliver results: three lessons in designing – and redesigning – a new program](#) [R4D Blog]
- [Learn from failure](#) [IDEO Video]
- [Iterate, iterate, iterate](#) [IDEO Video]
- [Failing fast and small: lean testing to get to better learning outcomes](#) [R4D Blog]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations for engaging in intelligent risk-taking for development innovation.

- ✓ All development programs (whether innovative or not) involve risk! What are some of the less obvious risks inherent in the work you are already doing? (e.g. the risk of a tool not being adopted by users, a lack of political buy-in for reforms, etc.)
- ✓ What criteria does our agency or organization use to define "smart" risks?
- ✓ How might our institutional or organizational structures and processes enable or limit the types or scope of intelligent risks that we can take?
- ✓ How does our organization's performance system incentivize or discourage risk-taking and learning from failure? How might we adapt individual performance incentives to create greater space for and reward smart risk-taking and learning?
- ✓ When considering investing in or undertaking a specific intervention or innovation, what are the tradeoffs we face in terms of risks and rewards?
- ✓ How can we use data, evidence, and research to better understand and reduce risks in our design or investment choices?

Use evidence to drive decision-making

Principle 4. Use evidence, including disaggregated data, to drive decision-making to improve impact and cost-effectiveness by developing clear metrics early on and measuring progress against milestones on an ongoing basis to help identify the most effective innovations and the remaining gaps.

Why is this important?

Without evidence, it is impossible for development funders and innovators to know whether the investments they make in an innovation are yielding returns in the form of impact. Gathering evidence to understand effectiveness is necessary, but not sufficient – that evidence must be taken up by development innovators, funders and other actors in their decision-making about how to improve a program, how to deploy resources, and more. Not only do development actors need to use data to understand the impact of an innovation, they also need data to better understand cost-effectiveness. When compared against alternative solutions, does the innovation deliver impact at a comparable or lower cost?

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

Evidence is often used for accountability purposes and to drive decisions made about how foreign aid and philanthropic funding is deployed for development impact. With limited resources, funders must take evidence of into account when making decisions about which innovations to support and how. Like partnerships, scaling, and other ingredients for development innovation, gathering and using evidence also requires dedicated resources in the form of a skilled team to conduct monitoring and evaluation or research. So while evidence is necessary to

inform investments, the generation of evidence is also an investment in itself. It is often a worthwhile one, because as seen in the examples below, innovations with demonstrated impact can unlock more funding and support. Evidence also has a role to play in driving innovators' learning, iteration, and decision-making and can help answer questions on design choices, how to more effectively target or engage consumers, determining how, where and when to scale, understanding the cost drivers of an innovation, or revealing unintended consequences. At times, instead of investing in evidence for learning purposes, development agencies may invest in measuring impact for accountability at the expense of evidence for learning purposes. This can create a "straightjacket of metrics" that limits innovators, implementers, and development agency staff in responding to data. Approaches such as early-stage formative research, lean testing, [rapid prototyping](#), and experimentation, can help advance learning [when uncertainty around an innovation is high](#), complementing rigorous impact measurement methods, including randomized controlled trials (RCTs), that are better deployed when uncertainty around an innovation's design and implementation have been reduced. To support innovations to scale, development actors can tailor their methods for evidence-gathering and use to an appropriate level of rigor relative to the uncertainty present at each stage. The four stories below provide examples of innovations that have invested in using evidence both in their own decision-making, as well as to demonstrate impact in a way that in turn informs funders' decision-making.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: How can we consistently provide a clean water supply to rural communities?



In the developing world, almost \$20 billion is spent on water supply infrastructure each year, yet 40% of rural water systems break after two years because there is no system to maintain them. eWaterPay is a pre-payment smart tap that ensures water revenue is tracked, accountable, and transparently used by governments or private organizations to pay for water system maintenance. It helps customers manage rural and urban water systems, ensuring water supply to customers is maintained. The use of real-time data and evidence is at the core of eWaterPay's innovation. Its cloud-based application, eWatercare, captures and processes large volumes of real-time operational and sales data, enabling the organization to immediately detect low flow rate and faults. This allows a far more rapid response, restoration of service and reduction in wastage – thus making eWaterPay an effective water management solution. And because usage and revenue are correlated, eWaterPay monitors both continually, which gives consumers reassurance that their water fees are being used to maintain

the water supply systems. This increases their trust in the system, leading them to purchase greater volumes of water. eWaterPay is 50% cheaper than other existing technology for pre-payment of water, which means that multiple taps can be installed across a village, reducing time and distance required to collect water with the result that women and girls can spend more time in school or on other productive activities. By using evidence to continuously improve the effectiveness of water services and to engender trust among customers, eWaterPay facilitates the growth of an efficient water market, ultimately enabling more organizations to invest in water supply solutions to serve very low income communities that were previously ignored. Visit eWaterPay's

[website](#) and this Medium [blog](#) to learn more.



THE CHALLENGE: TRAC.fm How can we increase citizen engagement on community issues in settings with limited press freedom?



Trac FM, an SMS-based polling platform, facilitates citizen engagement with interactive radio programs in Uganda that address community issues. Radio listeners respond to polls by sending an SMS message to a toll-free short code. The Trac FM software then automatically collates the responses, creates near real-time bar-chart data visualizations and plots respondents' locations on an online map accessible to the radio presenters, who then share the results with listeners and use the data to formulate questions for guests, including experts or politicians. Trac FM harnesses anonymous input from citizens to provide a near real-time snapshot of their opinions on issues ranging from school closings, curriculum, free lunch programs to government corruption. In addition to using data to understand these community challenges, Trac FM also uses evidence to improve its own practice. From the 15% of

poll respondents who subscribe to Trac FM, the program collects user data to better understand the demographic composition of poll respondents and to improve the program. After discovering that only 13 percent of poll respondents were female, Trac FM recruited female radio presenters and co-hosts to engage female listeners. Trac FM is working with over 25 radio stations in Uganda and is working with partners to bring the program to Bangladesh, Brazil, Afghanistan, Tanzania, and Somalia. Visit Trac FM's [website](#), [Making All Voices Count](#), and read this [article](#) to learn more.



Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: How can we address undernourishment that disproportionately affects women and young children?



Vitamin A deficiency (VAD) limits growth, weakens immunity, affects sight, and increases mortality; it afflicts over 140 million preschool children in

118 countries and more than seven million pregnant women. Orange fleshed sweet potatoes (OFSP), when coupled with community nutritional education, offer a promising solution by providing high levels of vitamin A. But gathering the evidence needed to scale this solution did not come easily. Integrated agriculture-nutrition interventions often require expensive consumption studies and blood samples to demonstrate increased micronutrient intakes and improved nutritional status. Mozambique has some of the highest VAD rates among young children—69%. So what better place to test an integrated agriculture-nutrition strategy? A two-year proof-of-concept study in Zambézia province demonstrated that young children in households producing and eating biofortified OFSP significantly increased vitamin A intakes, with a 15% decline in the prevalence of VAD. This was followed by a randomized control trial which

demonstrated that 14,000 households were reached cost-effectively with just one year of community-level nutrition education and access to OFSP. Because of these studies, the OFSP integrated approach is well-known as one of the few food-based interventions with solid evidence. These study results paved the way for development agencies to fund International Potato Center (CIP) to make Mozambique the hub for breeding for drought-tolerant OFSP in Africa and collaborate with many partners in the dissemination of OFSP. Since 2009, 15 improved drought-tolerant varieties have been released and over 500,000 households in Mozambique are now growing OFSP. OFSP now comprises 32% of all sweet potato production in the country. CIP also coordinates the Sweetpotato for Profit and Health Initiative, which in collaboration with seven NGO partners and many government institutions, has reached 5.3 million households in 15 sub-Saharan African countries with improved sweet

potato varieties, promoting their diversified use. Read this [story](#) on CIP's [website](#) to learn more.



THE CHALLENGE: How can we improve marginalized groups' access to relevant social protection policies and programs?



Women's World Banking



In 2006, Women's World Banking, a global nonprofit, partnered with a local health insurer and Microfund for Women (MFW), one of the largest microfinance institutions in Jordan, to create Caregiver, a form of health

microinsurance for low-income women entrepreneurs. Women who utilized or accessed Caregiver made loan payments on time, avoided debt due to hospital stays, made more decisions for themselves and their families, and had a strong sense of self-confidence and vision of their future. One key aspect of Women's World Banking's strategy helped reach this success: conducting intensive research into clients' needs to understand their financial behaviors and priorities before designing products. For the Caregiver

pilot, MFW and Women's World Banking designed a Pilot Protocol monitoring framework and briefed staff on key features. Women's World Banking and MFW made sure that staff could see clearly how success was defined and measured so that they could focus their efforts. Having simple, effective metrics was especially helpful for MFW, who were taking on a health microinsurance program for the first time. MFW and Women's World Banking agreed to run the pilot for six months, soliciting and incorporating performance feedback during that time, and conducting a detailed pilot review at the end. Based on the findings of the six-month review, MFW's board of directors elected to roll Caregiver out to all branches nationwide. Its success hinged on the partners' agreement on metrics and their evidence-driven decision-making. Caregiver has reached one million women and girls in Jordan and other countries where it has since been replicated. For more information on Caregiver, read Women's World Banking's lessons from [Caregiver in Jordan](#), visit their publication on insights on [inclusive health microinsurance in five countries](#) and check out [this video](#).

This principle was informed by IDIA's [Call for Innovation](#).

For more details on this and other development innovation principles in action, please visit www.idiainnovation.org.

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Additional resources

The resources below include blogs, articles, and tools that can help aid agencies and development actors consider approaches to evidence generation and use in decision-making.

- [Promoting evidence-based decision-making in development agencies](#) [ODI Note]
- [Strengthening evidence-based development: five years of better evaluation practice at USAID](#) [USAID Report]
- [Leveraging data and evidence to drive decision-making at USAID](#) [USAID Blog]
- [Standards of evidence](#) [Nesta Resource]
- [How good is your evidence?](#) [SSIR Article]
- [What counts as good evidence?](#) [Alliance for Useful Evidence Paper]
- [Harnessing the power of evidence](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Reconsidering evidence: what it means and how we use it](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Rethinking the E word](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Using research evidence: a practice guide](#) [Nesta Toolkit]
- [We are what we learn](#) [Medium Article]
- [The generalizability puzzle](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Medium Article] [How we define impact for our data innovation lab](#)
- [Innovation prototyping](#) [Nesta Article]
- [Prototyping framework](#) [Nesta Toolkit]
- [Prototype testing plan](#) [Nesta Toolkit]
- [What is Adaptive Management?](#) [USAID Blog]
- [Adaptive management looks like it's here to stay. Here's why that matters.](#) [From Poverty to Power Blog]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations for engaging in evidence-driven decision-making for development innovation.

- ☑ What does my organization consider to be “evidence”? What is included or excluded by this definition? How could we strengthen our standards of evidence?
- ☑ How is evidence used in decision-making at my organization? What processes and criteria involve evidence? Is evidence used for learning, accountability, or both? How does evidence generated for accountability differ from that we use for learning, if at all?
- ☑ When investing in or undertaking a specific intervention or innovation, how do we take evidence into account? What weight do we give it relative to other factors?
- ☑ How can we invest in the capacity, resources, processes, etc. needed to produce and use evidence?
- ☑ How can we avoid the “straightjacket of metrics” while still being evidence-driven?



Learn quickly and iterate

Principle 5. Seize opportunities to learn quickly, iterate and ensure the impact of promising innovations before scaling them up by also acknowledging failure and inefficiencies.

Why is this important?

As international development agencies face tighter aid budgets and greater scrutiny over their spending, donors, innovators and those in between have increasingly embraced a commitment to make evidence-informed decisions. While a positive trend in many ways, the development community often overlooks opportunities to learn from failure. In a funder – grantee relationship, reporting on successes and impact achieved is critical in order to keep the funding flowing. But by brushing aside moments when things did not go according to plan, the development community is missing out on opportunities to understand what went wrong, test solutions, and accelerate progress faster. Development innovators and organizations often do all they can to avoid failure, even though it is the best teacher. What's more, openly acknowledging failure is often a catalyst that takes innovations from good to great.

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

The development community needs a paradigm shift in how it views failure, learning and iteration. Innovators and funders alike should remember that when we pilot a new idea or innovation, failure is to be expected. We collect data, even during pilots, so that we can actively find the limits of what is working and fail in small, controlled ways that enable us to more quickly develop a model that works. Failure — and with it, opportunities for learning and iteration — goes hand in hand with risk-taking. Failing well and creating the space for learning and iteration to take place begins with an organization's culture and incentives. How do we respond when a colleague or partner shares a failure? Do we embrace and reassure them, and get curious about what they have learned, or do we react with shame? The stories below include examples of when things did not go according to plan and how innovators and development funders responded to learn, adapt, and improve.evidence both in their own decision-making, as well as to demonstrate impact in a way that in turn informs funders' decision-making.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we improve effectiveness and efficiency of planting to reduce the amount of natural resources required and provide communities with food?



Reel Gardening has pioneered a way to properly space seeds by placing them in strips of newspaper fused with the perfect combination of flour and fertilizer. The result is an approach to planting that is easier

and requires less water than traditional methods. So far, Reel Gardening has reached nearly 500,000 people. But success did not come without failure first. Claire Reid, Reel Gardening's founder, cites the ability to learn and pivot quickly as crucial to the organization's success. Reel Gardening's initial plan for production and scaling focused on a feeding scheme for schools and community groups in impoverished areas. But challenges arose, including no space for gardens, inconsistent manpower to care for them, overwhelmed teachers, and lack of accountability. Facing failure, Reel Gardening changed its approach to foster behavioral change through educating users on how to grow

successfully by making changes to create a more positive experience for the consumer. To deal with the lack of space for large gardens at schools and in communities, Reel Gardening created a new product called the "Grow Pod" – a self-contained garden in a tube that only requires soil and comes with Reel Gardening Seed Tape, a weed guard to prevent weed growth and water evaporation, and access to a "Planting Revolution" mobile app. This new product also addresses financial sustainability with its one-for-one price model, in which one Grow Pod is donated to a school or underprivileged community for every one purchased. In the face of failure of one pathway, Reel Gardening was able to



find another way forward that allowed it to achieve impact in communities. Learn more at Reel Gardening's [website](#) and in this [story](#).

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we connect geographically isolated African smallholder farmers to share information to improve their farming practices?



Harnessing farmers' willingness to share knowledge freely and amplifying what they themselves find useful, the farm.ink chatbot allows farmers to share peer-to-peer knowledge and connect with each other

and with buyers. The farm.ink team has embraced iterative processes that allow for testing, failing, and improvement to establish the tone and user experience of the chatbot, so that buyers and farmers will use it in day-to-day business. One early failure that farm.ink faced was a gender gap in the app's user base. At the root of the problem, the service was not well-marketed to female users. Recognizing that including women's voices – whether their success stories, failures, advice, or questions – was essential for the quality and relevance of their service to a broad potential user base, the farm.ink team set about changing this. The team used targeted Facebook campaign ads, with women farmers'



stories and messages front and center, to bring female farmers onto the platform, and was able to close

the gender gap in its user base within a week. Analyzing user data, farm.ink also found insights that bolstered their business case for engaging women farmers. Female users were slightly more likely than male users to create new content and provide a high volume of high-quality comments, and were twice as likely as men to comment with a positive sentiment. By seizing the opportunity to learn quickly and iterate, farm.ink helps ensure that women – who make up up to 50% of farmers in Africa – can also access information to improve their farming practices. Visit [farm.ink's website](#) and Medium [blogs](#) to learn more.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: How can we advance progress towards the SDGs through a community innovation space?



Armenia
National SDG
Innovation Lab



As a part-government, part-UN hybrid, the world's first national SDG innovation lab in Armenia is designed to find new approaches to address complex social, economic and political issues in the country.

The SDG Lab serves as a space for experimentation, collaboration, analytics and capacity building to support Armenia's National Development Strategy 2030. With initial ambitions to create a data platform of indicators to track the sustainable development goals, the SDG lab decided to test this idea in the energy sector first. After conducting preliminary user research, they found limited demand from energy experts, who did not need real-time metrics on the SDGs and did not trust the data that was already available. As the team put it, "findings like these could have easily spelled doom." But using what they learned, the SDG lab team changed their approach to focus instead on working with national statistical offices to address data quality

challenges and collaborating with other development actors, including UNICEF, to harness existing data. Even though their first idea of tracking SDG indicators did not take off, the SDG lab team persevered. They turned the feedback they received into valuable learning that informed how they proceeded. Check out this Medium [blog](#) and visit the SDG Lab's [website](#) to learn more.



THE CHALLENGE: How can we harness the power of human waste to improve health and reduce fuel pollution?



Sanivation



In addressing sanitation and environmental challenges in rural Kenya, Sanivation's success depends on user perceptions and behavior and constant learning and improvement based on community feedback.

In East Africa, millions of people have no access to proper sanitation, which leads to deadly disease. But because traditional toilets need proper cleaning and plumbing, they are not an effective solution. Instead, Sanivation installs container-based toilets in homes for free and charges a small monthly fee to service them. Rather than dump the waste, Sanivation transforms it into small, odorless briquettes that are sold back into the community as a cleaner alternative to charcoal, saving 88 trees per ton produced. Along the way, the Sanivation team has encountered challenges but has improved its services by embracing learning. Initially, the concept of in-home toilets caused potential Sanivation customers to picture pit latrines, the norm in rural Kenya,

inside their homes – the Sanivation team quickly changed the name for in-home toilets to “blue boxes” to avoid confusion. Another hurdle was convincing clients, many of whom can't count on a steady monthly paycheck, that paying the monthly maintenance fee was worthwhile. Communicating with clients also proved difficult, as many homes don't have addresses – so the team developed an address system themselves. By taking on the lack of sanitation infrastructure and embracing challenges as problem-solving opportunities, Sanivation has achieved early success with toilets in 2,500 homes and a plant that creates and sells 60 tons of briquettes each month. Sanivation



hopes to scale throughout East Africa to reach over a million people by 2020. Read this [article](#) and blog and visit Sanivation's [website](#) and the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) to learn more.

This principle was informed by IDIA's 2015 [Call for Innovation](#). For more details on this and other development innovation principles in action, please visit www.idiainnovation.org.

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Additional resources

The resources below include websites, articles, and tools that capture approaches and ideas to help aid agencies and development actors seize opportunities to acknowledge failure, learn and iterate.

- [Facing global development's fear of failure](#) [Devex Article]
- [Admitting failure & resources page](#) [Websites]
- [Let's talk about global development failure](#) [Devex Article]
- [Are development organizations failing to learn from failure?](#) [Devex Article]
- [Fail forward](#) [Website]
- [Innovation and iteration: friends not foes](#) [HBR Article]
- [The promise of lean experimentation](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Improvement triggers](#) [Development Innovation & You Toolkit]
- [Learning loop](#) [Development Innovation & You Toolkit]
- [Promises & potential map](#) [Development Innovation & You Toolkit]
- [Question ladder](#) [Development Innovation & You Toolkit]
- [Target group](#) [Development Innovation & You Toolkit]
- [Creating a culture of learning and accountability](#) [Bridgespan Article]
- [A charity just admitted that its program wasn't working. That's a big deal.](#) [Vox Article]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations for engaging in intelligent risk-taking for development innovation.

- What is the culture of our organization when it comes to failure, learning, and iteration? Do we have space and time for learning to take place? If not, how can we create it?
- How does our organization's performance system incentivize or discourage learning from failure? How might we adapt individual performance incentives to create greater space for and reward learning, iteration, and good failure?
- As innovation funders, how do our reporting processes, metrics, and procedures promote or discourage learning and iterating from failure and inefficiency among our grantees or innovators?
- How do we capture failures, learning moments, and pivots in our data and reporting?
- How do we use data to inform and adapt our design and investment choices?



Facilitate collaboration and co-creation

Principle 6. Facilitate collaboration and co-creation across public, private and civil society sectors and coordinate the application of scientific, technical, social and business innovations to leverage intellectual, financial and social resources from all, and share data, standards, results and learning widely.

Why is this important?

The scale and ambition of the 2030 Development Agenda, and the life-changing and life-saving solutions needed to get there, will not be achieved without harnessing the financial, technical and other strengths of partners across sectors. Government, civil society, private sector and other actors must work together to design and realise path-breaking improvements to service delivery, products and policies. Openness in data, standards, results and learning helps support this process. In addition, impactful ideas and inventions rarely achieve the scale necessary to sustain positive impact on a large number of people without drawing on expertise and resources from across public, private, and social sectors. Partnerships are thus an essential tool for the world to generate new solutions and scale those solutions to make progress in reducing poverty and increasing economic prosperity. They offer a unique opportunity to find new ways of working together to accelerate development impact.

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

While the importance of cross-sector partnerships, collaboration, and co-creation for development innovation is widely recognized, ensuring that these interactions are productive, effective, and impactful is easier said than done.

Development agencies, whose innovation capacities remain centralized in Northern-based headquarters, can still do more to devote time, energy, and resources to engaging and partnering with developing country communities, civil society, private sector and government. Operational challenges also affect development institutions' ability to partner, with regulatory environments, procurement and financing mechanisms, and institutional structures that often do not lend themselves to, and sometimes actively discourage, working across sectors.

In addition, actors within different sectors do not always speak the same language, and often have very different cultures, ways of working, ways of measuring impact, and investment timelines. As a result, involving all partners in co-designing the goals and scope of a given partnership is a critical step in ensuring its success and ability to create meaningful impact. However, such an investment in co-creation requires dedicated time and energy, and allocating dedicated personnel within development agencies to co-design and manage partnerships is not always possible. Finding a common agenda, cultivating trust, communicating effectively, and aligning on what a successful partnership looks like is easier said than done. The stories below highlight examples of how partnerships, co-creation, collaboration, openness, and learning have helped achieve greater development impact.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we improve access of marginalized groups to relevant social protection policies and programs?



Women's World Banking



In 2006, Women's World Banking, a global nonprofit, partnered with Microfund for Women (MFW), one of the largest microfinance institutions in Jordan, and a local health insurer to create Caregiver,

a form of health microinsurance for low-income women entrepreneurs. Caregiver targets women because of their extra challenges in accessing healthcare due to lower literacy and mobility, and addresses women's increased health risks due to pregnancy and childbirth by providing a per night cash benefit for hospital stays, including those related to maternal health. Women who utilized or accessed Caregiver made loan payments on time and avoided additional debt due to hospital stays, made more decisions for themselves and their families, and had a strong sense of self-confidence as well as a vision of their future. As MFW's first foray into health insurance, and the local insurer's first exposure to microfinance, Caregiver's success hinged on

the partners' agreement on concrete terms, processes, and information-sharing protocols. Its positive impacts have inspired Women's World Banking to develop health insurance products that respond to the needs of low-income women in other markets, including Peru, Egypt, Morocco, Uganda and India, reaching one million women and girls total. For more information on Caregiver, read Women's World Banking's lessons from [Caregiver in Jordan](#) and visit their publication on insights on [inclusive health microinsurance](#) in five countries.



THE CHALLENGE:

How can we improve the coordination of health facilities and actors in times of crisis?



Tupaia is a great example of a data-sharing innovation in the Western Pacific that facilitates greater coordination along health and facilities supply chains, engaging governments, donors, emergency response

partners in the most efficient distribution of resources across the health system. Tupaia provides a map pinpointing every health facility across six countries: Cook Islands, Kiribati, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, and Vanuatu. When a disaster strikes, local and international response and recovery teams mobilize to assess the damage and aim to restore critical services – particularly medical care – as quickly as possible. Within just 48 hours after Cyclone Gita struck Tonga in February 2018, data had been collected and entered on Tupaia from all seven facilities on the island. Comparing this post-cyclone data with baseline data collected several months earlier helped response teams determine how water, electricity and available services

were impacted. Tonga's Ministry of Health and incoming response teams from Australia and New Zealand used live dashboards on Tupaia to plan their response and direct resources appropriately. In the case of Tupaia, a growing level of coverage to six countries since 2017 demonstrates the value of innovations that enable partners to use real-time data to plan their responses and work more effectively together to allocate health supplies and resources. Visit Tupaia's [website](#) and learn more from this Medium [blog](#).



Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we provide remedial instruction in schools to improve children's low learning levels?



The “Catch Up” program exemplifies how sharing results from tested interventions across contexts – in this case, Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) – can accelerate progress in improving lives. TaRL targets teaching to children’s basic skill levels, with teachers assessing learners’ basic reading and mathematics levels to group them according to level, rather than age or grade. Teachers then spend a period of the day or year using engaging, relatable activities to teach basic skills. Building on over a decade of rigorous research on TaRL, a group of partners including J-PAL Africa, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), Pratham, UNICEF, USAID’s Development Innovation Ventures, USAID Zambia, VVOB, and Zambia Education Sector Support Technical Assistance worked together to adapt the Teaching at the Right Level methodology for Zambia to develop Catch Up, which uses TaRL to provide remediation to address low learning levels. The partners shared global evidence

on remedial education, shaped the design of Catch Up by mapping evidence to the Zambian context, supported pilot implementation and monitoring, and assessed viability for scale up. In addition, a learning journey to India allowed Zambian ministry officials to observe a TaRL program in action under Pratham and to meet with Indian government officials leading the program. After two years of iterative learning, the Ministry of General Education in Zambia will scale up Catch Up to approximately 1,800 schools over the next three years. Learn more about TaRL, Catch Up, and the partners [here](#).



THE CHALLENGE:

How can we accelerate the testing and production of drugs to help tackle major infectious diseases?



The Global Health Investment Fund (GHIF) demonstrates the power of partnering to pool and creatively deploy financial resources for development impact. GHIF’s partners, including Sida, the Gates Foundation, and Grand Challenges Canada, among others, have committed \$108 million in diverse capital to the shared goal of developing and producing drugs, vaccines, and diagnostic tests for infectious diseases and maternal and infant health issues that cause significant morbidity and mortality in resource-limited settings. In recent years, the false, yet damaging perception that it is not financially viable to invest in research and development of cures for diseases that affect those living in poverty, including malaria, pre-eclampsia, cholera, HIV, river blindness, and more, has led to global neglect, dampened production of vaccines, and damage to health and development outcomes. As a partnership and financial innovation itself, GHIF invests in research and production of late-stage innovations to

address these challenges, focusing on opportunities with a high probability of successful commercialization within two or three years. One example is a plastic vial oral [cholera vaccine](#), which, compared to alternatives, is cheaper, can be preserved longer, and does not require a cold chain to maintain. With GHIF support, production of this vaccine has improved the global supply of affordable cholera vaccines over fivefold, supplying 20 million vaccines to over a dozen countries, including Somalia, Haiti, Yemen, Zambia, and others. GHIF’s portfolio of investments are estimated to save 1.1 million lives and improve 17.4 million lives per year at scale. To learn more, visit GHIF’s [website](#).



This principle was informed by IDIA's 2015 [Call for Innovation](#). For more details on this and other development innovation principles in action, please visit www.idiainnovation.org.

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Additional resources

While the above examples demonstrate a variety of development impacts that successful partnerships can support, establishing, managing, and maintaining partnerships, collaboration, and learning requires careful consideration and action. Below is a sampling of resources and tools with lessons and good practices for forming and maintaining successful multi-sector partnerships for development innovation and impact.

- [A portfolio approach to social innovation partnerships](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Cutting through complexity: a roadmap for effective collaboration](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Collective Impact](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Building partnerships](#) [Nesta Toolkit]
- [People, place and partnerships in health](#) [Nesta Blog]
- [A journey towards good collaboration: Learnings & successes of the Startup Europe Partnership](#) [Nesta Blog]
- [Good and bad partnerships](#) [Nesta Blog]
- [Nonprofit — corporate partnerships: a new framework](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Accepting the challenges of partnerships](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Create a new team or partnership](#) [OECD Toolkit]
- [Liberating structures](#) [OECD Toolkit]
- [The Partnerships Analysis Tool](#) [OECD Toolkit]
- [Co-design Canvas](#) [OECD Toolkit]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations when undertaking partnerships for development impact.

- ✓ What is our comparative advantage as an organization, and what resources, whether financial, technical, or other, can we deploy for development impact?
- ✓ How might partnerships help complement and leverage the resources and expertise that our organization or agency can bring to bear?
- ✓ What types of partnerships do we typically form in our work?
- ✓ How might our institutional or organizational structures and processes enable or limit the types or scope of partnerships that we currently have?
- ✓ How might our organization or agency adapt its internal structures and processes to better engage and partner with a greater diversity of actors?
- ✓ What specific partnerships does my team need to advance our development innovation approach and impact? What steps can we take to create, manage, and maintain these partnerships?
- ✓ What steps does my team already take to share data, standards, results, and learning with others? How can we improve our practice in this regard?
- ✓ What other sectors do I / my team seek to learn from? How do I seek this learning? What sectors or types of partners might we have left out?



Identify scalable solutions

Principle 7. Identify scalable solutions, including technologies, that demonstrate high-potential to achieve and sustain significant impact and cost-effectiveness, and open the potential to reach millions of people in need.

Why is this important?

Substantial challenges remain in reducing poverty and hastening global development. While innovations are themselves rarely ‘silver bullet’ solutions to poverty and development challenges, they do hold the potential to enhance and accelerate existing practices, displace ineffective ones, and ultimately improve the breadth and depth of an intervention’s reach. This potential is only realised when promising innovations are taken to scale through different pathways and with the support of different actors.

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

For a start, not all innovations are scalable, and it can be challenging to tease out exactly what factors within an innovation’s business or delivery model might

enable or constrain its ability to operate at scale. The evidence base behind when and how one innovation scales while another fails is still relatively immature, which in turn makes it harder to know what to look for in assessing ‘scalability’. There are also many varied pathways to scale for an innovation, ranging from organic growth, franchising or licensing, to government uptake, replication and more. Some innovations will scale through a combination of different pathways that may present themselves along the way, which means there is no ‘correct’ set of scalability criteria that will guarantee a scaled outcome.

Perhaps most significantly, scaling up also takes time, and often requires long-term partnership and support beyond existing institutional funding cycles and strategies. The process of scaling also requires continuous investment in the collection and evaluation of data to understand how well the original innovation is able to adapt to differences across contexts, geographies, and target populations.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: How can mental health services be provided to excluded communities at scale?



Friendship Bench is a great example of a mental health innovation that has scaled within its country of origin, Zimbabwe, to reach over 27,500 people across 72 clinics in three cities. Since 2016, Friendship Bench's lay health

workers, known as 'grandmother health providers', have filled the gap in mental health services in Zimbabwe's cities for an estimated 30% of primary care patients who struggle with common mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression. Trained in problem-solving therapy, a type of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) geared to improve an individual's ability to cope with stressful life experiences, the grandmother health providers sit with and provide support to patients on wooden benches near health clinics. Because it fills a gap related to mental health services that is present in many parts of the world, Friendship Bench has also scaled to other contexts, including Malawi and New York City. To scale up to reach additional vulnerable populations, Friendship

Bench is partnering with Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF), which focuses on mental health care in prisons, to contribute to the care of released inmates with mental illnesses. As it scales, Friendship Bench is also working on a technological platform to deliver training courses to lay health workers as distance learning, to supplement direct teaching and to provide ongoing professional education. To learn more, visit the organization's [website](#) and the [Global Innovation Exchange](#).



THE CHALLENGE: How can citizens tackle public sector corruption in a safe and simple way?

Phones Against Corruption



Phones Against Corruption is a highly scalable citizen engagement innovation launched by UNDP, Papua New Guinea Department of Finance, and the Australian telecom company MobiMedia. After quickly demonstrating

results in reducing widespread public corruption in Papua New Guinea, including the arrest of two public officials for mismanagement of over USD \$2 million and investigations of hundreds of others, Phones Against Corruption has been scaled nationally. With an estimated 40% of PNG's annual budget (approx. USD 6.5 billion) lost to corruption, Phones Against Corruption tackles a problem that significantly hinders PNG's development efforts. The texting app provides a safe space to anonymously share information about public corruption. It is easily accessible, anonymous and free of charge to the general public. After a trial with the Department of Finance, the intervention was scaled and implemented across all PNG governmental departments,

and to the general public at a national level. In addition, countries including Bangladesh, Fiji, and others in the Asia-Pacific are eager to replicate the model. Visit UNDP's [website](#), [blog](#) and the [OECD project profile](#) for more information.

Phones Against Corruption

RESULTS

Since July 2014

2

Arrests



TWO public officials arrested for fund mismanagement of more than 2 million US dollars

5

Waiting for Court Decision



FIVE cases have been uncovered and waiting for court decisions

250

Under investigations



250 more cases are being investigated

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: How can mosquito-borne diseases be eliminated at scale in a cost-effective way?



After discovering that infecting mosquitos with Wolbachia bacteria provides a natural way to stop them from transmitting viruses such as dengue fever, Zika and chikungunya, researchers at the [World Mosquito Program](#)

(WMP) have been working to scale this solution to reduce mosquito-borne diseases worldwide. Several features make this innovation highly scalable. First, six years of monitoring and research suggests that Wolbachia maintains itself at high levels in mosquito populations without the need for reapplication, thereby reducing dengue infection rates. Secondly, because this solution is expected to be self-sustaining and does not require reapplication, it may be incredibly cost-effective; the WMP is working to lower the cost of its deployment to \$1 per person. While the WMP's Wolbachia solution is easy to reproduce, scaling it is more complex and has required the organization to work closely with partners across the globe. Government

regulatory approvals and full community support are necessary in order for WMP to undertake research and to release Wolbachia-infected mosquitos into communities to reduce disease prevalence. It is important to educate and reassure community members in mosquito release areas that the approach is indeed safe and beneficial. WMP is also partnering with local health authorities in Fiji, Vanuatu, and Kiribati to reduce the incidence of mosquito-borne diseases in the Western Pacific. Learn more in [this blog](#) and on [Radio New Zealand](#).



THE CHALLENGE: ZOLA ELECTRIC How can we provide sustainable electricity services to off-grid communities?



By developing a radically affordable solar leasing service, Zola Electric is scaling quickly to provide solar energy to people with limited or no access to the national grid in Tanzania, one of the least electrified countries in Africa.

Compared to other sources of energy such as kerosene or candles, the solar energy provided by Zola Electric is cleaner, more renewable, more sustainable, and more cost-effective, which contributes to the innovation's scalability. Zola Electric's solution is also specifically designed to reach and accommodate people living in rural and hard-to-reach areas, with rooftop solar panels delivered and maintained, replaced, and upgraded by a local salesforce, and options for customers to pre-pay for the service using mobile money payments in increments as small as a single day. As of early 2016, Zola's service had reached 100,000 households,

and was available in 14 regions in Tanzania. The program continues to add 10,000 new homes a month. Leveraging three rounds of initial development agency investment, Zola has raised \$95 million in follow-on capital and is well on its way to fulfilling its mission of lighting up Africa. For more information, visit the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) and this [article](#).



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Additional resources

As more lessons emerge from experience, development practitioners are increasingly documenting examples of successful scaling, and are also developing resources, frameworks and tools to assist others in considering how to effectively scale proven innovations. Below is a preliminary list of several such resources that offer useful starting points in planning and managing for the scale-up of development innovations.

- [Insights on Scaling Innovation](#) [IDIA Report]
- [Good Practice Guides for Funders: Scaling Innovation](#) [IDIA Report]
- [Insights on Measuring the Impact of Innovation](#) [IDIA Report]
- [Pathways to Scale: A guide for early-stage global health innovators on business models and partnership approaches to scale-up](#) [USAID Guide]
- [Idea to Impact: A Guide to Introduction and Scale of Global Health Innovations](#) [USAID Guide]
- [Millions Learning: Scaling Up Quality Education in Developing Countries](#) [Brookings Report]
- [Journeys to Scale: Accompanying the Finalists of the Innovations in Education Initiative](#) [UNICEF-R4D Report]
- [Scaling: Innovation's Missing Middle](#) [McClure & Gray Report]
- [Managing the Journey to Scale Up Innovation](#) [McClure & Gray Report]
- [Engineering Complex Scaled Up Innovations](#) McClure & Gray [Report]
- [Scaling Up: A Framework and lessons for development effectiveness from literature and practice](#) [Brookings Report]
- [Taking Innovations to Scale: Methods, Applications, and Lessons](#) [MSI-R4D Report]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations involved in scaling.

- ✓ [Is the innovation's evidence of effectiveness and impact robust enough to suggest that it has the potential to reach scale and be sustainable? What additional evidence is needed?](#)
- ✓ [What approaches for scalability assessment, including examining influencing factors or using a criteria-based approach, are most feasible and appropriate in this case?](#)
- ✓ [What influencing factors, including the vision for scale, investment and scaling timeframes, financial support and management, leadership and influence, feedback loops and learning mechanisms, and others, will contribute to or inhibit scaling?](#)
- ✓ [What environmental factors, such as market or community demand, political cycles, supporting champions, policy and regulatory frameworks, supporting infrastructure, and more, will influence the success of the scaling process, and how?](#)
- ✓ [What is the biggest risk or unanswered question that could threaten the success of the innovation's scale up process?](#)



Integrate proven innovations

Principle 8. Integrate proven innovations into organizations’ larger programming by removing the internal and external barriers to using these solutions in current and future projects, and support the acceleration of growth and impact of proven innovations.

Why is this important?

Scaling is critical in terms of extending the impact of innovations to address the world’s biggest development challenge. But only when implementation at scale is sustainable can an innovation achieve the greatest impact over time. Integrating proven innovations into existing programming and delivery channels is an important means of ensuring that when donor funding or dedicated support ends, an innovation will persist and continue to accelerate its growth and impact. Development actors need to consider options for sustaining progress early in the scaling process — through government policies, the private sector, or other partnerships — otherwise good innovations may not take hold.

What to consider when putting this principle into practice

Many supporters of innovation experience a [bias towards finding new solutions](#) rather than recognizing and supporting the good solutions that already exist. As a result, between pilot and scale, innovations face a “[missing middle](#)” of funding and support. Between pilot and

implementation at scale, innovations face a [financing gap](#) when they require more funds than private philanthropies can provide, but are still too small and risky for institutional social investors. However, existing innovations, especially those that already have evidence of impact, are often ripe for adaptation to new contexts and scaling up to increase their impact. But to give innovations the greatest chance at making the biggest impact over time, scaling is not enough — they must be integrated into existing delivery mechanisms and channels. When they are proven solutions to critical challenges, innovations need to be widely accepted, integrated into day-to-day behavior, and formally institutionalized to take hold for the long run. To make sure that their impact will be sustained over time, innovations can be mainstreamed into development actors’ existing programming, reflected in government policies or integrated into government service provision, or adopted by the private sector. Partnership, then, is a crucial ingredient for the successful integration of proven innovations. Looking inward, development agencies can also do more to integrate innovation by moving it from the margins — often siloed in [separate labs](#) or offices — into their mainstream programming by integrating it into their policies, procedures, and processes.

Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE: How can we use proven methods to improve low learning levels of children?



Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) offers an example of how solid evidence and close partnership with government can facilitate integration of a proven innovation. The TaRL methodology targets teaching to children's basic skill levels, with teachers assessing learners' basic reading and mathematics levels to group them according to level, rather than age or grade. Teachers then spend a period of the day or year using engaging activities to teach basic skills. In Zambia, a 2014 national assessment found that 68 percent of grade 2 learners could not read a single word in their local language; grade 5 students also scored poorly in reading and mathematics. Following education sector scoping that revealed widespread variation in learning levels within the same classroom, J-PAL Africa identified Zambia as an appropriate context for adaptation of TaRL. The government's commitment to improving students' basic skills enabled a partnership to adapt the best practices

of TaRL to Zambia. This resulted in the creation of the Catch Up program to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills of primary school students in grades 3–5 through remediation. Catch Up was piloted across 80 schools, testing three models from 2016 - 2017. Key lessons from the pilot will inform the program's scale-up, with the Ministry of General Education in Zambia implementing Catch Up in 1,800 schools over the next three years. TaRL's evidence of impact, the partners' collaborative approach to customizing the program for Zambia, and strong partnership with the Ministry, is enabling TaRL to take hold for widespread impact on children's learning levels. Learn more about TaRL, Catch Up, and the partners [here](#).



THE CHALLENGE: How can we ensure communities have the life-saving medical supplies they need?



By providing simple, life-saving medical supplies and technologies to communities, and empowering women in the process, Living Goods has

brought quality, low-cost health care to five million people across Kenya and Uganda. Living Goods employs and trains local people – the majority of whom are women – as Community Health Promoters (CHPs) to sell goods and life-saving medical supplies door-to-door at affordable prices. It provides saleswomen with entrepreneurial skills while improving health outcomes in their communities. Inspired by direct sales models, Living Goods CHPs sell fortified foods, simple malaria and diarrhea treatments, safe delivery kits, water filters, clean cook stoves, and solar lights. The Living Goods model has been proven to reduce child mortality by 27 percent and it costs less than \$2 per person per year.

In addition, 90 percent of Living Goods CHPs say that their work boosts their confidence, financial independence, and status in their communities. USAID's Development Innovation Ventures (DIV) program is supporting the scale-up of Living Goods in Kenya, building on the organization's rigorous evidence base and operations in Uganda and existing 6,000 CHPs who are providing quality health care in their communities. DIV is also supporting research on replication partnerships, which could ultimately help Living Goods achieve greater scale and impact. Visit Living Goods' [website](#) and the [Global Innovation Exchange](#) to learn more.



Examples of this principle in practice

THE CHALLENGE:

How can we improve the effectiveness of early warning systems and save lives in the face of natural disasters?



As one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, Indonesia regularly experiences earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, landslides, and tsunamis. Dr. Harkunti Rahayu, a social scientist, conducted research to pinpoint the

barriers preventing early disaster warnings from reaching people in time. She found that to be effective, early warning systems had to be integrated into the public consciousness. With data from interviews with local community stakeholders, Dr. Harkunti worked with the local government in Padang, Sumatra, a crowded coastal city, to pilot a regional drill using vertical shelters and popular communication channels. On National Disaster Preparedness Day, Padang joined 21 out of the 24 tsunami-prone Indian Ocean countries in the drill. Per Dr. Harkunti's research, the Padang local government incorporated the use of popular communications into the drill, using mosque speakers, social media groups, local radio, school networks, and smartphone messaging apps. Based on her recommendation, they also encouraged

citizens to create individual and family emergency plans. The local government anticipated that 100 people would participate in the drill, but over 1,300 citizens responded, consolidating into the 79 vertical shelters the government had built during the previous year. This experience convinced local government officials in Padang to include Dr. Harkunti's innovative approaches in the city's official disaster management plan. Dr. Harkunti is now in talks with the National Board for Disaster Management to write individual and family emergency plans into national policy. As chairwoman of the Indian Ocean working group on disaster risk reduction and preparedness, her work has become a baseline for learning and replication in over a dozen countries. Read "[Living in Harmony with Risk](#)" to learn more.



THE CHALLENGE:
How can we reduce costs for unbanked populations to transfer money and make payments?



Launched in 2007 by Safaricom, Kenya's largest mobile-network operator, M-PESA is a world-leading mobile money system that

lets people transfer cash using their phones. Over 17 million Kenyans use M-PESA, and about 25% of the country's gross national product flows through it. Originally supported through a UK government grant to design a system for making microfinance loan repayments by phone, early iterations of M-PESA reduced the costs associated with handling cash, making possible lower interest rates. Given that over 86% of the global population lacks access to full banking services, this was a potentially revolutionary innovation. Researchers at the British Department for International Development documented how M-PESA users

spontaneously traded mobile credit and, realizing the broad potential of the scheme for money-transfer, introduced a version of the idea to the CSR team of Vodafone, the parent company of Safaricom. Safaricom patented the software built by a student at Kenya's Moi University, and other partners, including Segentia, IBM, and Huawei, helped build and maintain the software and programming behind M-PESA. With 3.5 billion people who lack access to banking services worldwide, M-PESA provides an important solution for reducing the costs of transferring money and making payments using mobile technology. M-PESA also enabled other social innovations, including M-Kopa, an off-grid solar energy solution that allows cash-strapped families to make mobile monthly payments, to take off. M-PESA has created nothing short of a systemic reimagining of banking and utility services in Kenya, and demonstrates the importance of integrating proven solutions, via partnership and private sector uptake, to scale development impact. Visit [Medium](#) and [the Economist](#) to learn more.

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Additional resources

The selection of resources below provides insights on topics related to integrating proven innovations, including how development agencies and actors can address the 'missing middle' of innovation financing, form partnerships with the private sector and with government to ensure sustainability and scale, and look inward to more deeply integrate innovation into their own practices, policies, and institutional mechanisms.

- [Innovation isn't an idea problem](#) [HBR Article]
- [Enough innovation already!](#) [SSIR Article]
- [Where to find the 'missing middle' of capital for sustainable innovations](#) [Forbes Article]
- [How blended capital can help entrepreneurs make it through the missing middle](#) [Devex Article]
- [Scaling: Innovation's missing middle](#) [McClure & Gray Report]
- [Partnerships for sustainable development](#) [Harvard Kennedy School Summary]
- [Why collaboration will be key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals](#) [World Economic Forum Article]
- [Innovation for sustainable development: the role of private sector collaboration](#) [Global Reporting Article]
- [Creating a new norm: moving innovation from the margins to the mainstream](#) [OECD Blog]
- [How to change your agency without expensive, stress-inducing restructuring projects](#) [Devex Opinion]
- [Why 'Partnerships for sustainable development' counts as an essential sustainable development goal](#) [Forbes Article]
- [Building Partnerships Map](#) [Development Innovations & You Toolkit]
- [Why and how does collaboration drive innovation in the public sector?](#) [Nesta Blog]

Questions for reflection

The questions below can help development practitioners, innovators, and decision-makers think through key considerations for integrating proven innovations to support the acceleration of impact.

- ✓ Looking beyond the innovation lab, how is innovation reflected in my organization's internal project management procedures and decision-making?
- ✓ How does our organization's performance system incentivize or discourage innovation? How might we adapt individual performance incentives to create greater space for and reward innovation?
- ✓ How can we deploy our organization's financial and other tools to help address the 'missing middle' of development innovation financing?
- ✓ How can we integrate the lessons learned from innovations, and the innovations themselves, into traditional agency programs and interventions?
- ✓ Have the proven innovations that we support created partnerships, especially those with governments or the private sector, that will increase the sustainability of their impact after donor financial support ends? If not, how can we facilitate partnerships to ensure the innovation can scale sustainably and be integrated into existing systems?