



GIZ
INNOVATION
FUND

IDEAS THAT SPARK INNOVATION

GIZ Innovation Fund

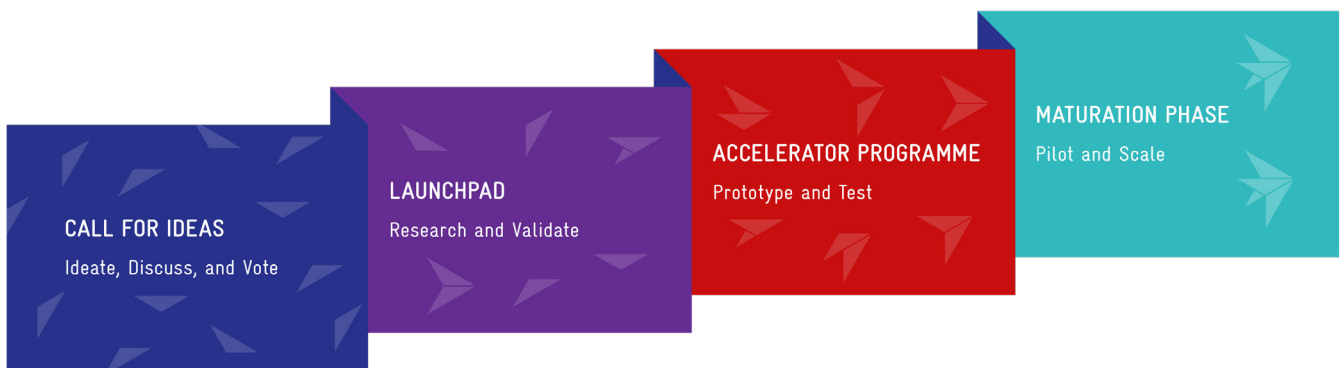
In today's world, organisations that want to stay relevant and have an impact need to be able to innovate.

The GIZ Innovation Fund is GIZ's corporate intrapreneurship programme. Established in 2017, the programme aims to foster ideas that have the potential to strengthen innovation within our development cooperation projects.

The GIZ Innovation Fund aims to: strengthen the culture of innovation within the organisation, build competencies in innovation methods, promote networking and collaboration across units, and develop innovative approaches to our service delivery.



The programme includes a company-wide Call for Ideas, a one-month digital learning phase for initial idea validation (Launchpad), a six-month Accelerator phase, and a nine-month Maturation phase.



The GIZ Innovation Fund...

- 1 ...provides space and resources to experiment and bring innovative ideas to life.
- 2 ...builds capacity in human-centered design, lean start-up and agile working methods.
- 3 ...encourages cross-departmental and cross-hierarchical collaboration and the development of new external partnerships.

Methods

Methodologically, the GIZ Innovation Fund (IF) builds on approaches for agile product development, such as design thinking and lean start-up.

Design Thinking

Design thinking utilises elements from the designer's toolkit such as empathy and experimentation to arrive at innovative solutions. By using design thinking, decisions are made based on what future target groups and implementing partners really want instead of relying only on historical data or making risky bets based on instinct instead of evidence. This approach calls for continuous feedback between the developer of a solution and the target users. Solutions and ideas are specified and communicated in the form of prototypes as early as possible, so that potential users can test them and provide feedback – long before the completion or launch. In this way, design thinking generates practical results.

For new products and services to be successful, they have to be desirable, feasible as well as viable.



Desirability: the innovation is needed and creates value for the user and partners

Feasibility: the innovation can actually be created or built and implemented

Viability: the innovation has a functioning and sustainable business model and can be successful over time

Lean Start-Up

Lean start-up aims to shorten development cycles by adopting a combination of hypothesis-driven experimentation, iterative testing and validated learning. The central hypothesis of the lean start-up methodology is that if we build products and services iteratively, we can reduce risks and the need for extensive initial project funding and costly product launches and failures.

Agile product development comprises the cycle of build – measure – learn, demonstrating how to continuously adapt an idea or concept based on feedback. The feedback enables new aspects to be added to an idea, permits errors and flaws to be erased, or unwanted features to be eliminated with every loop.

This is a great advantage in contrast to the waterfall approach, which describes a sequential process in which one step must be completed before the next can begin and it is rather difficult to adapt the project to changing requirements or new market insights.



Track Record

Employees from all around the world submit their ideas and participate in the Innovation Fund. To date, six rounds of the GIZ Innovation Fund have been carried out, with more than 749 ideas submitted. During the course of these six rounds, 36 teams have participated in the Accelerator program and received methodological support and seed funding.

Out of these teams 22 ideas have been implemented in new or existing projects¹. The Innovation Fund enjoys extensive reach within the company, with a total of 32.949 votes from employees supporting an Innovation Fund Idea in the Community Voting throughout the six rounds.

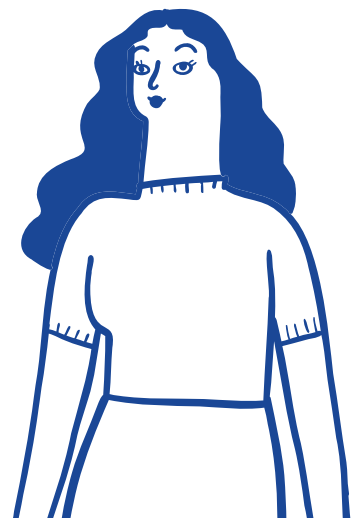
Janina Kempf
Round 4
Team: ScrollSafe

"The Innovation Fund has positively shaped my perception of innovation at GIZ. It introduced me to many new methods and helped spread them broadly across the organization. I believe this kind of initiative is crucial for mainstreaming an innovation mindset within the company. What I particularly value is how the Fund ensures that innovation isn't just a headquarters initiative but extends to field structures, empowering colleagues all over the world with new methods like design thinking and innovation management."



Yara Elshennawy
Round 5
Team: Circles of Transition

"Participating in the Innovation Fund was a complete paradigm shift for us. The startup-like methodology introduced by the Fund forced us to think differently - focusing on the value of the product itself and stepping far outside our comfort zone. It ultimately taught us to prioritize the end user's perspective and develop solutions that truly resonate with their needs. This shift was challenging but incredibly rewarding."



Looking back on 7 years of GIZ Innovation Fund²

The Innovation Fund has become an important platform for fostering creativity and engagement within GIZ.

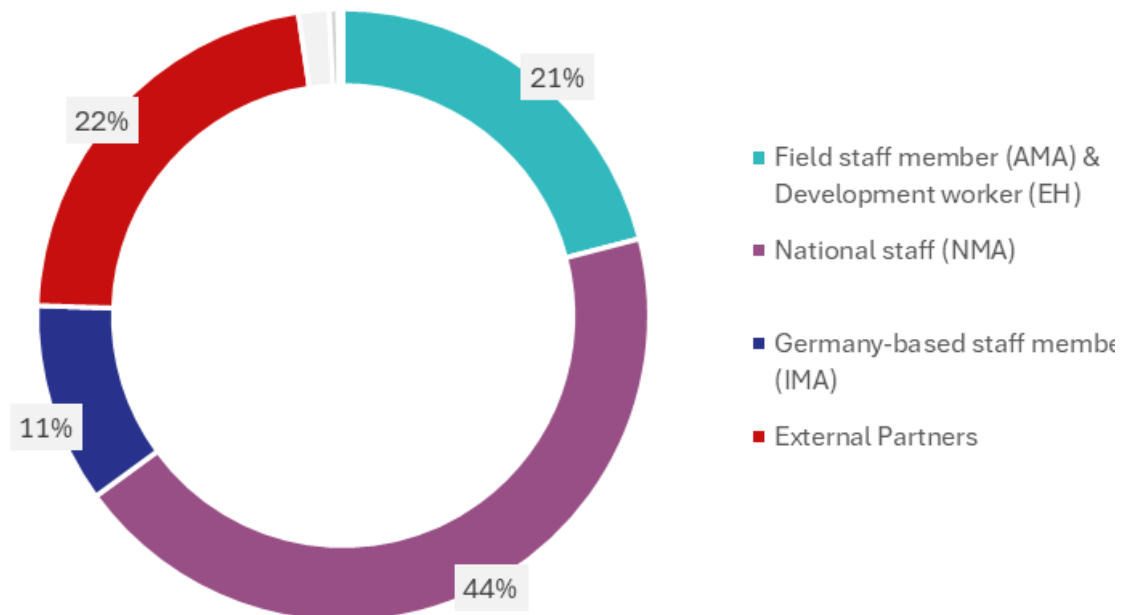
Since the first round in 2017, the initiative has mobilised 2,217 participants, 749 ideas have been submitted and 466 people have been trained in innovation methods.

This demonstrates the widespread enthusiasm and collaboration for innovation across the organisation.

The programme has achieved global engagement. Each round has seen participation from multiple nationalities, with a peak of 65 countries in round 1 and an average of 54 nationalities per round.

A key highlight of the programme was the Community Voting. With 6 teams competing for support in each round, an impressive 32,949 employee votes were cast across all 6 cohorts - a testament to the collective spirit of innovation.

Roles of participants



² evaluation conducted by Mainlevel in Nov. 2024. Online survey n=86 plus 8 Interviews and 3 focus group interviews

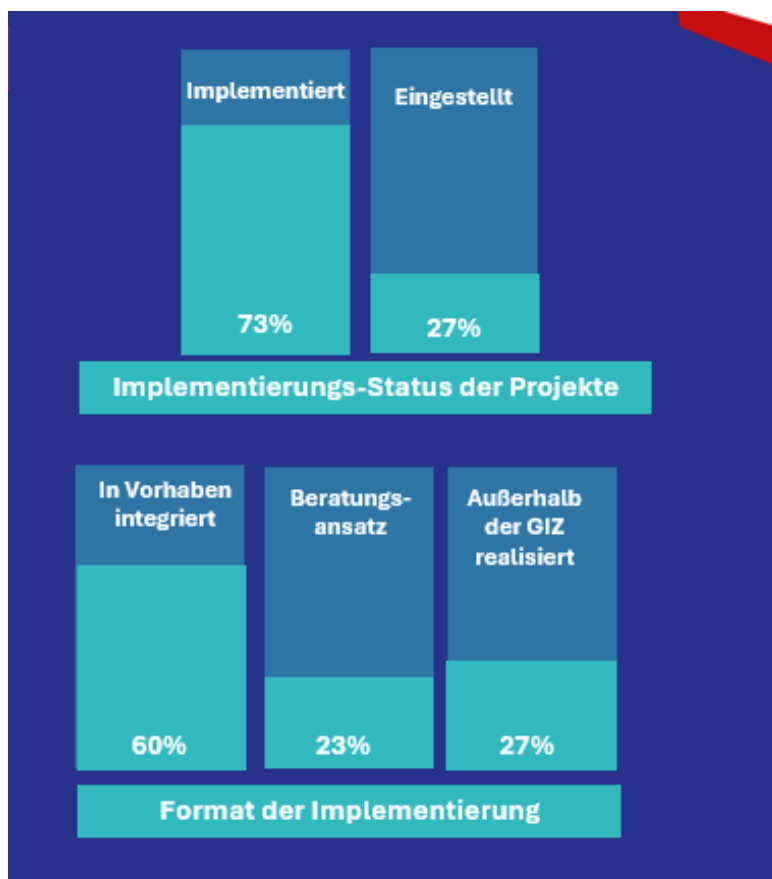
Diverse Topics, Meaningful Impact

Each round of the Innovation Fund had its specific challenge

With its diverse and inclusive approach, the Innovation Fund teams have aimed to tackle multiple issues. Most prominent topic was Economic Development and Employment, but the program also focused on areas such as Climate Action and Rural Development.

Turning Ideas into Action

The Innovation Fund has also become a catalyst for innovation within GIZ, creating new paths for developing and implementing inspiring ideas.



- successfully implemented- discontinued
- integrated into existing or new projects within GIZ.
- incorporated into advisory approaches of GIZ..
- continued outside GIZ, with companies or international organizations taking the lead.

In addition, the IF has produced several lighthouse projects, creating new approaches for new fields of action:

- Open source language data collection service- Team VOICE
- Digital health monitoring – Emmunize
- App for the self-assessment of integrity of small and medium enterprises- The Integrity App

A Culture of Innovation and Learning

The GIZ Innovation Fund has also strengthened GIZ's innovation culture and capacities:

- For 75% of participants in the Call for Ideas, the InnoFund has strengthened the image of GIZ as an innovative company.
- For 80%, the InnoFund has made a positive contribution to the image of GIZ as an attractive employer
- A remarkable 91% of Accelerator participants reported a shift in their innovation mindset, becoming more open to experimentation, critical thinking, and confident in their ability to develop ideas.

The impact was also felt on a day-to-day basis, with 48% of Accelerator participants noticing a significant change in their working style, particularly around iterative problem solving and continuous improvement.

Building Bridges: Collaboration & Partnerships

One of the IF's greatest strengths is its ability to foster cross-sectoral and cross-departmental collaboration:

- 69% of participants formed new partnerships within or outside GIZ.
- 73% of Accelerator participants received support from external partners, including technical experts.

The Innovation Fund has acted as a bridge between internal and external structures, broadening GIZ's reach and creating pathways to cooperation with the public sector, the private sector and civil society.

Beyond the Programme: A Future Powered by Innovation

The GIZ Innovation Fund wasn't just a temporary initiative, as it also helped shape the future of innovation at GIZ. The programme has successfully pioneered new methods to innovation promotion and contributed to the strategic development of innovation management approaches.

The Innovation Fund has not only brought together thousands of people, it has also created and supported a culture of innovation that will be part of GIZ's future. By

fostering creativity, collaboration and trust, the Innovation Fund is paving the way for impactful solutions to global challenges – one idea at a time.

In the following you can get to know the winning teams of the last 5 rounds³.

³ Sixth round ongoing

WINNING TEAMS ROUND 1

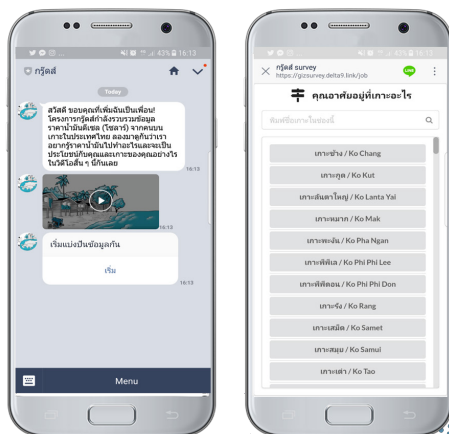
Groots – The Grass Roots Data Aggregator

The challenge they are tackling

Development organisations (and private companies) are constantly facing the need for information from the field, be it on the price of diesel fuel or bread or on the availability of health services. Traditionally, they send field researchers to collect this data, a process that is time- and cost-intensive.

Their solution

Groots offers an alternative solution. Local retailers are identified as intelligence points within the communities. Groots builds long-term relationships and grows a network of shop owners through its innovative technology: tabtap SHOP. It is an easy-to-use and highly localised point-of-sales app that runs on basic smartphones of shop owners. The transactional data helps shops to better manage their cash flow and find ways to increase income or decrease spending, while at the same time providing business insights to actors in the supply chain. tabtap SHOP allows Groots to grow a network of shop owners who can be queried about shop-, market- and community-related issues at any time.



Piloting countries

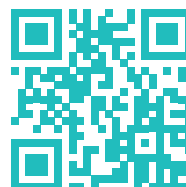
Global/ start in SEA, fast adoption in SSA

Where they stand

Since its inception, Groots has grown into a data collection service for private and public companies, sourcing grass-roots expertise and metrics in emerging markets using swarm dynamics. Incubated at GIZ, Groots now exists as an independent spin-off within GIZ's social entrepreneurship ecosystem.

Team

Thomas Chrometzka (Field staff | Thailand), **Camille Dufresne** (External | Germany), **Simon Bittner** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Kajarin Yotdam**, (National staff | Thailand)



Contributing to SDGs:

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 1

The challenge they are tackling

In a globalised world, products from all over the world are consumed on a daily basis, with food making up a particularly large share of this consumption. But most people do not know where their food comes from or the effort required to produce it.

Their solution

XtraPay enables a unique connection between end consumers and farm workers to be established. Consumers find out where their products come from and can thank the people at the beginning of the supply chain.

XtraPay allows buyers to individually 'tip' farmers once they buy exotic fruits at their local supermarket. Additionally, consumers can access information on the farm where the fruit is produced and harvested. The project is piloted with pineapples from Ghana.

Piloting countries

Ghana and Germany

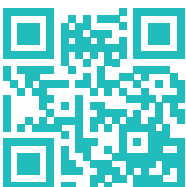
Where they stand

The team plans to pilot XtraPay for 10 months as part of a Partner Africa project together with the Federation of German Wholesale, Foreign Trade and Services (BGA).

Team

Tobias Straube (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Anna Peter** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Andrea Breyer** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Bianca United** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Frank Weissenfels** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Lisa Henke** (External | Germany)

Xtra Pay



Contributing to SDGs:



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 2

emmunize

The challenge they are tackling

Worldwide, 1 in 5 children fail to receive the important vaccines they need. It is hard to keep track of children's immunisation schedules with a paper-based record system. In addition, irregular communication between health workers and communities leads to many children not showing up for vaccination appointments and leaving health workers unable to identify who is missing. The availability and quality of vaccines are not guaranteed during mobile vaccination services, since the cold chain is easily broken.

Their solution

emmunize was developed to increase the acceptance of child vaccination programmes for children living in remote rural areas. The app allows users to monitor the children's vaccination plan, identify which children have not yet been vaccinated and monitor the cold chain of the vaccines. This allows medical teams to quickly and easily plan vaccination sessions in each village and mobilise local people. emmunize enables them to access the data they need when conducting vaccination sessions in remote locations and guarantees that the continuous integrity of the cold chain to ensure that vaccines are effective.



Piloting countries

Kenya

Where they stand

The idea has been refined in collaboration with three health facilities and has been pursued in nine remote communities in Malawi. A mobile app is linked to the new electronic patient registry in the Bilira region of Malawi. In addition, a shelter was built where children under the age of five can be vaccinated. It is also equipped with a solar-powered refrigerator using climate-friendly refrigerants.

Team

Nika Greger (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Simon Mischel** (External | Germany), **Tatiana Görhardt** (External | Germany), **Leonard Lemontoi Loontaye** (External | Kenya), **Christopher Bruce Jäger** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Sofia Nürnberg** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Siri Snow** (Germany-based staff | Germany)



Contributing to SDGs:



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 2

VOICE

The challenge they are tackling

Interactions are increasingly voice-based. However, more than 50% of online content is in English, with the languages of the Global South hugely underrepresented. One effect is that developers and start-ups in the Global South lack freely available training data for algorithms, i.e. open-source voice data in their respective languages to train AI-powered speech-to-text engines.

Their solution

The project started as an open-source voice data collection service in Rwanda. The solution helps to empower today's underrepresented languages in the digital world and make technology more inclusive.



Piloting countries

Rwanda

Where they stand

The idea became the basis for a component of BMZ's fAIrForward project on ethical AI. It also enabled new partnerships between BMZ and the Mozilla Foundation. The team expanded from the focus on open-source voice data to developing a network of open-resource initiatives (NORI), an incubator programme fostering a self-sustaining ecosystem for open resources as well as consulting on open-resource innovation, management and implementation to support the development of open-resource businesses and the implementation of their product. Local project partners of team Voice created the start-up Digital Umuganda that is providing AI-based solutions in Rwanda.

Team

Daniel Brumund (External | Germany), **Arlett Stojanovic** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Lea Gimpel** (Germany-based staff | Germany). Not pictured: **Jan Krewer** (Development worker | Rwanda)



Contributing to SDGs:



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 3

partiCipate

The challenge they are tackling

Inclusive public participation that leaves no one behind is a pillar of the 2030 Agenda. To participate in public decision-making more actively, citizens want to see formats and solutions that are easily accessible, easy to participate in actively and that are trustworthy. Decision-makers need to know about how to set up participatory processes and about suitable tools and formats, included in a digital space. So far, advice on and experience with tested and meaningful participation approaches is scattered, not standardised and does not adequately reflect digital opportunities.

Their solution

PartiCipate brings user-centred advice and a wealth of knowledge together in a single solution: the digital one-stop shop for inclusive digital and face-to-face participation. PartiCipate provides free digital advisory services on inclusive participatory formats (both digital and face-to-face), advice on how to set up a participation strategy and detailed information about available open-source participation platforms. A step-by-step advisory guide ensures that the advice matches specific user needs. The product analyses the participatory formats best suited for the specific context and objective of the user, also considering the target groups, their digital access, literacy, etc. To support this, PartiCipate has established a cooperation based on trust with four open-source platforms that are ready for use: consul, Ushahidi, Adhocracy+ and CitizenOS.

Piloting countries

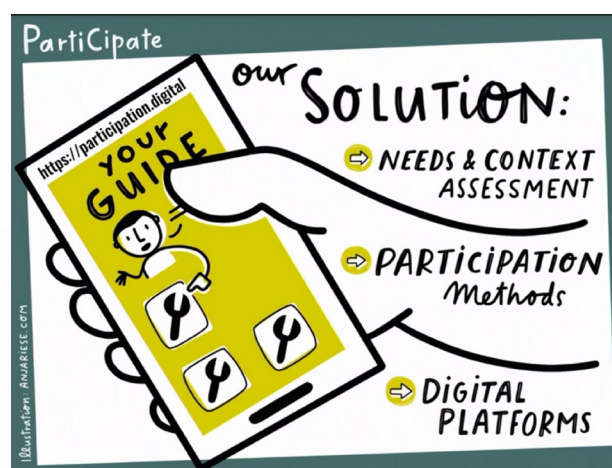
Kyrgyzstan, Palestinian territories

Where they stand

The one-stop-shop is now live. Parallel to product development, the team supported the implementation of the open-source platform Adhocracy+ in a GIZ project in Kyrgyzstan. In the Palestinian territories, the consultation platform is currently being implemented in the Inclusive Digital Governance project. A new cooperation with the Sector Programme Governance started in early 2022. BMZ is interested in developing PartiCipate further. Currently, seven projects in different regions are partnering with the team to implement PartiCipate and provide further feedback on the advisory service.

Team

Sandra Fuhr (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Lisa Hiemer-Maqoma** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Johannes Mager** (External | Uganda), **Nina Harnischfeger** (Field staff | Zambia), **Annika Schönfeld** (Germany-based staff | Germany), **Katharina Lampe** (Germany-based staff | Germany)



Contributing to SDGs:



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 3

The challenge they are tackling

Owners of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries often lack the digital skills to customise software themselves to digitise their business operations, while existing service offers are often too expensive and not tailored to their needs. The tech community focuses on outsourcing and proprietary software rather than servicing their local market. With a local support offer, MSMEs are more inclined to introduce a cost-efficient Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution. ERP tools can promote the formalisation of businesses.

Their solution

The open source-based ERP software shERPa offers easy handling, basic functions, low costs, local IT-community support and local value add-in, provided in the local language. It consists of interconnected modules, such as bookkeeping, sales, inventory, warehouse, and customer-relationship management for formalising businesses and enabling them to grow. The magic lies in the local support provided by local IT-companies at lower cost and in local languages, customised to meet the needs of MSMEs in developing countries.



shERPa

Piloting countries

Morocco, Benin, Egypt, Albania

Where they stand

Today, the initial idea of shERPa as an IT solution has changed to become a more holistic approach: shERPa is now an advisory offer of the Sectoral Department to support GIZ colleagues working in private sector development, helping them learn how to best support the digital transformation of their target groups, i.e. (M)SMEs, particularly through (open source) ERP software solutions. GIZ colleagues or projects can submit a request to receive relevant support via the Portal for Internal Clients.

The ideal approach depends on the local context and local (digital) ecosystem, which differs widely among GIZ's partner countries: local IT service providers and local solutions may already exist in some countries, which means it is important not to distort the local market. There is no one size-fits-all approach.

Team

Innovation Fund Team: Timo Müller (Germany-based staff | Germany), Asim Adeel (Germany-based staff | Germany), Elisabeth Hobl (Field staff | Kosovo), Tarek Annan (External | Germany). Not pictured: Valeria Morua Hernandez (Field staff | Germany); new team: Laura-Kristin Baric (Germany-based staff | Germany), Asim Adeel (Germany-based staff | Germany).
New Team: Felix Kullmann (Germany-based staff | Germany)



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 4

Waste No Waste



The challenge they are tackling

Over 90% of the population in Malawi depends on charcoal and firewood for their cooking and heating needs every day, which leads to rapid deforestation and high GHG emissions. Meanwhile, forests are unable to sustain population growth and are losing 5% of their area each year. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of agricultural waste are burned in Malawi's fields every year. Given the lack of any productive practical use, the country is squandering the opportunity to create wealth from agricultural waste. This is despite the fact that Malawi is highly dependent on biomass to meet its energy needs, such as household and commercial cooking and heating.

Their solution

The idea is to transform agricultural waste residues into pelletised fuel for meeting domestic and commercial energy needs in Malawi. While such machines already exist, the innovative feature here is that the briquettes are produced in mobile plants, where the briquette producer goes to the farmers in the field, thus benefiting farmers who live in very rural areas.

Piloting countries

Malawi

Where they stand

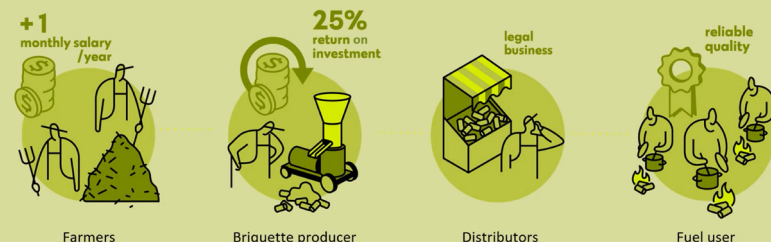
As a part of the 2022 Maturation Phase, the team is working on the project with support from the GIZ Business Development Unit and the GIZ Innovation Fund. Once the machine arrives in Malawi, the team will run some tests to validate their hypothesis. The team is already in contact with investors interested in their solution as well as aspiring entrepreneurs who would help distribute the solution within the country.

Team

Grace Zimba (National staff | Malawi), Naomi Manjolo (National staff | Malawi), Peter Schramm (Field staff | Malawi), Dr. Soumen Maity (External | India), Christa Roth (External | Malawi), Achim Kress (Field staff | Malawi), Debaprasad Sah (External | India)

We create positive impacts for various actors

Ecosystem



Contributing to SDGs:



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 4

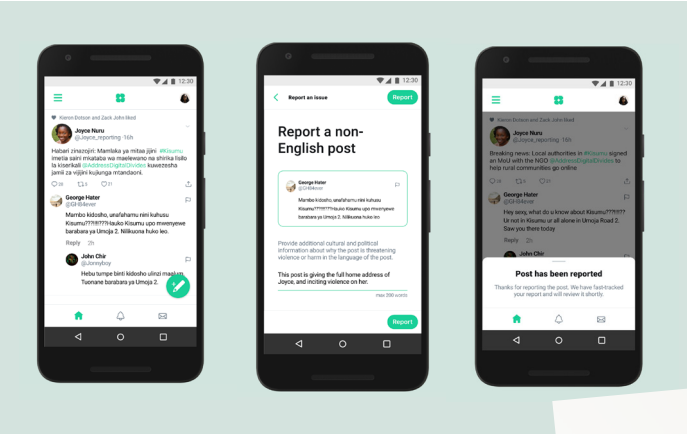
ScrollSafe

The challenge they are tackling

Increasingly severe online gender-based violence (OGBV) leads to reduced and unsafe use of the internet. The pandemic has made combatting OGBV even more urgent. Women need quick and convenient access to guides, resources, and contacts adapted to their specific local context in order to counteract and cope with OGBV.

Their solution

The initial idea was a toolbox that can be directly implemented into the user's social media interface. In this scenario, the toolbox may have taken the form of a fixed search tab, a chatbot, a discrete pop-up, or a warning like Twitter's disinformation alert on specific tweets. It would have been accessible on the social media platforms themselves so women experiencing OGBV could have immediate and seamless access.



Contributing to SDGs:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Piloting countries

Kenya

Where they stand

Soon after the Final Pitch Event, the team realised that the product teams of the social media companies have their own research and UX departments and are not interested in the ScrollSafe toolbox. As other opportunities and channels have proven to be more promising for reaching the overarching goal, the team has shifted away from their initial idea. Currently, the ScrollSafe team is aiming to build a coalition of private and public organisations. Their main goal is to bring civil actors together with political and private decision-makers to jointly develop user-centred approaches for fighting online gender-based violence.

Team

Laura Hartmann (Germany-based staff | Germany), Alissa Frenkel (Germany-based staff | Germany), Salomé Eggler (Field staff | Kenya), Aaranya Rajasingam (National staff | Sri Lanka), Gaurav Sharma (National staff | India), Janina Kempf (Field staff | India), Etienne Koeppel (External | United Kingdom)

Meet the team



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 5

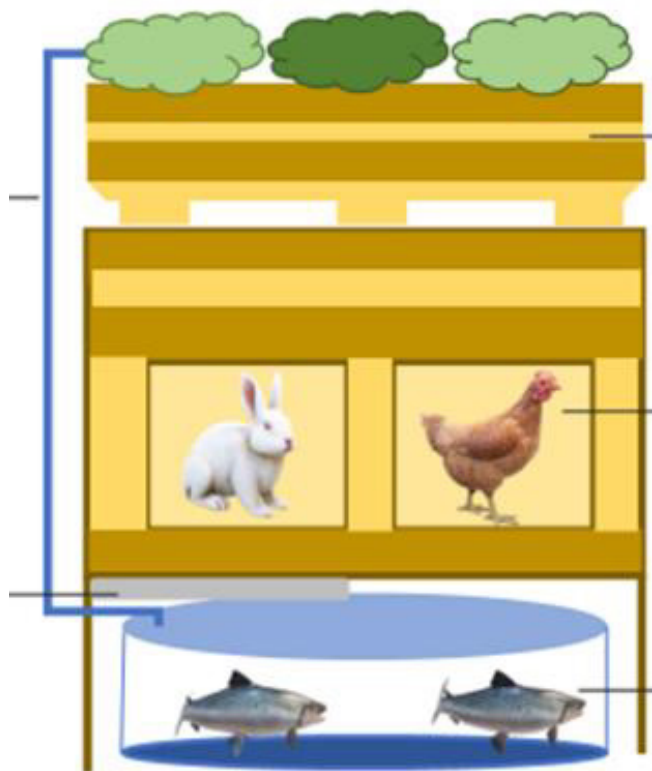
Circular Urban Garden

The challenge they are tackling

One of the requirements for people facing poverty and hunger is to find a sustainable approach to meeting their families' nutritional needs and achieving food security, regardless of limited availability and fluctuating prices.

Their solution

The idea is to inspire, educate and support individuals, schools and communities to create their own Circular Urban Gardens. These gardens include vertical structures to optimize the use of limited space. It is possible to have multiple levels of economic activity, with fish at ground level, animals above and a fruit and vegetable garden on top.



Piloting countries

Nairobi and South Sudan

Where they stand

The Circular Urban Garden project has made significant progress in its mission. Five garden areas have been established, providing proof of concept for the scalability of this initiative. Training programs equipped communities in Kenya and South Sudan with the skills to create and maintain these gardens, while innovative systems like using Black Soldier Fly larvae composting and broiler feed compositions were developed.

Educational resources, including a training video, have been produced to ensure knowledge is accessible and widely shared.

However, challenges such as abandoned gardens and insufficient visual aids in training manuals highlighted the need for ongoing support and improvements.

The team is actively addressing these issues to ensure the project's sustainability and impact. The solution is planned to be part of a new project in South Sudan.

Team

Heimann, Carla Lisa (field staff | Kenya), **Faith Chege** (field staff | Kenya), **Verena Waldhart** (Germany-based staff | Germany)

Contributing to SDGs:



WINNING TEAMS ROUND 5

The challenge they are tackling

Climate change is increasing the frequency of natural disasters, with people in the Global South being particularly affected. The effects of natural disasters can severely impact communities and destabilise regions, which can potentially have long-term effects on people's mental well-being.

Their solution

The team's goal is to create a user-friendly and comprehensive app that provides personalised information, resources and training on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in disasters. They focus on building community resilience and addressing psychosocial needs before, during and after disasters.

Piloting countries

Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq

Where they stand

A significant innovation is the integration of an AI assistant, designed to guide users and provide personalized recommendations, benefiting both professionals and non-professionals. The collaboration with MHPSS.net, a global platform for mental health and psychosocial support, connects the app to a global network of professionals, organizations, and communities. The app's design prioritizes accessibility, making traditionally static resources like PDFs mobile-friendly and interactive. The team has also collaborated with a video agency to produce content in form of videos that resonates with diverse audiences. The final design has been completed, and the inclusion of the AI assistant represents a significant step forward in personalized disaster support.



Contributing to SDGs:

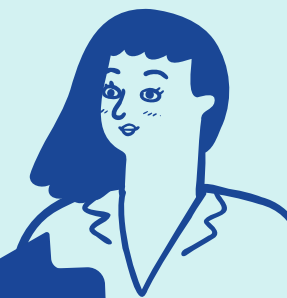


Be Prepared App



Team

Esther Ridder (field staff | Jordan),
Tumha Dawod (field staff | Iraq)



"Here are some of the biggest takeaways from my participation in the GIZ Innovation Fund: think big but start small, strive for a continuing innovation instead of perfection, never be afraid to fail, and have fun!"

Amanda Rocha

Round 1

Team: The Integrity App



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