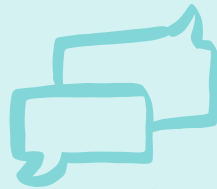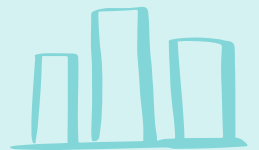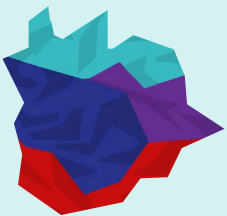GIZ
INNOVATION
FUND

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 an initiative by the management board which serves to strengthen the innovation culture within GIZ by developing and piloting innovative ideas for products, services and modes of delivery. Launched in 2017, the programme was established to promote ideas with the potential to boost the effectiveness of our projects in development cooperation.
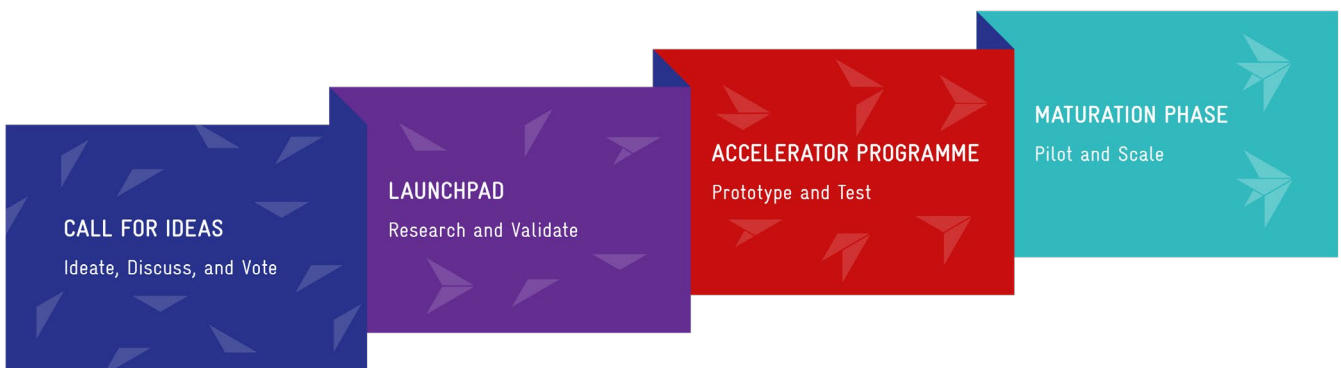
The GIZ Innovation Fund is a driver for mindset change, highlighting that 'Innovations can be found everywhere' and 'We are one GIZ.'

As a modern corporate intrapreneurship programme, the GIZ Innovation Fund contributes to staff development and the cultivation of methodological competencies within GIZ.

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.

IDEAS

CALL FOR IDEAS
Ideate, Discuss, and Vote

LAUNCHPAD
Research and Validate

ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME
Prototype and Test

MATURATION PHASE
Pilot and Scale

The GIZ Innovation Fund…

1 … provides room, space and resources to experiment and bring innovative ideas to life.

2 … builds capacities in human-centred design, lean start-up and agile working methods.

3 … encourages cross-departmental, cross-hierarchical collaboration and the establishment of new external partnerships.

Methods

Methodologically, the GIZ Innovation Fund builds on approaches for agile product development, such as designthinking 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 beneficiaries 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 successfull, they have to be desirable, feasible as well as viable.
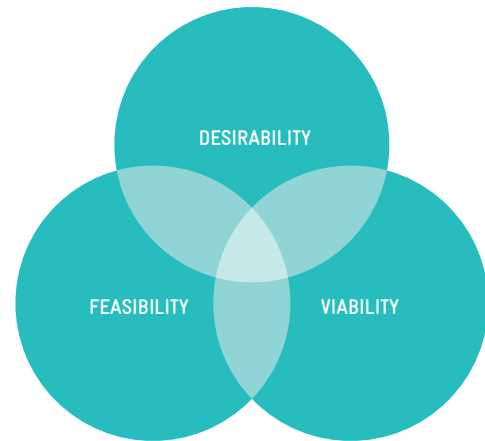
Desirability: the innovation is needed and creates value for the user and partners
Feasibility: the innovation can actually be created or built and implemented
Viability: the innovation has a functioning and sustainable business model and can be successful over time

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.
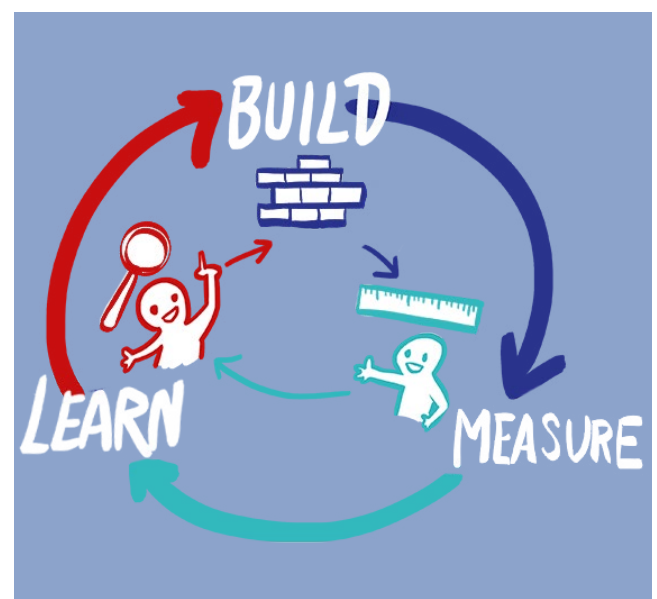
Track Record

Employees from all around the world submit their ideas and participate in the Innovation Fund. To date, four rounds of the GIZ Innovation Fund have been carried out, with more than 550 ideas submitted. In the course of the first four rounds, 24 teams have participated in the Accelerator and received methodological support and seed funding. Out of these teams 13 ideas have been implemented in new or existing projects. The Innovation Fund enjoys extensive reach within the company, with one in five employees supporting an Innovation Fund Idea in the Community Voting.

Arlett Stojanovic
Round 2
Team: Voice

"Taking the user-centric perspective – that was my biggest takeaway! It gave me greater sensitivity for this whole question. Since I was a planning officer, I was in touch with a lot of different projects, especially in the planning phase and keeping the user-centric perspective in mind is something I carried over to other projects and to the rest of my work."

Siri Snow
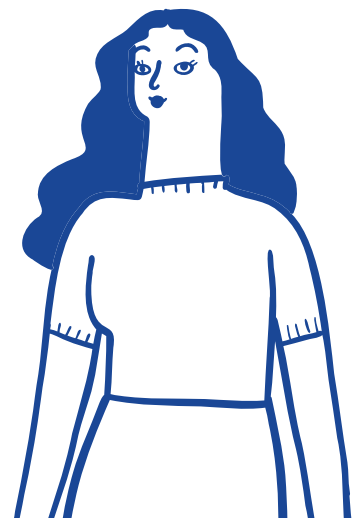**Round 2,**
Team: emmunize

"One of the things that I learned during the GIZ Innovation Fund which I now use in my work life is flexibility. Since then, I am always trying to think in new ways, to work agile, to think in iterations. How I can proceed, try out something new, maybe change it again. And it also affected the way I communicate now. It taught me how to present a new idea to the outside world so that it also convinces others. There are so many takeaways."

Asim Adeel
Round 3 & 4,
Team: shERPa & Helpers

"I always encourage the people around me to participate in the GIZ Innovation Fund. It's a great experience to work on an idea outside your regular work.
It gives you the chance to work on something that can be beneficial for the people around you. It is a huge opportunity for everyone – both GIZ internals and externals. I might even apply again."

Distribution of participants in Call for Ideas by country

2017–2022

"One of the most amazing parts of the GIZ Innovation Fund is that you start with a small idea and over time you develop a great passion. And this passion makes you work across time zones, across geographies, across hierarchies – across everything!"
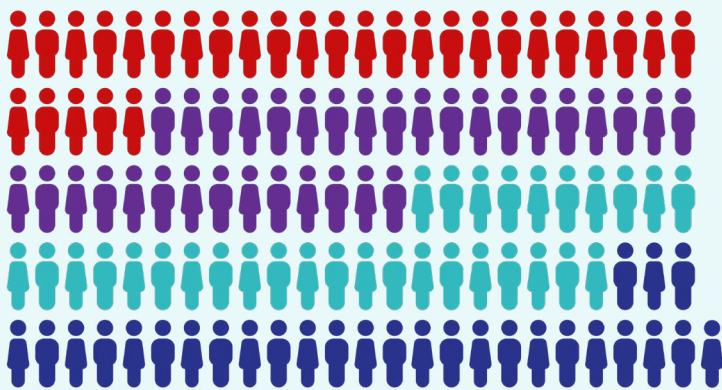
Gaurav Sharma
Round 2,
Team: ScrollSafe

Location GIZ Staff

170

PEOPLE

1
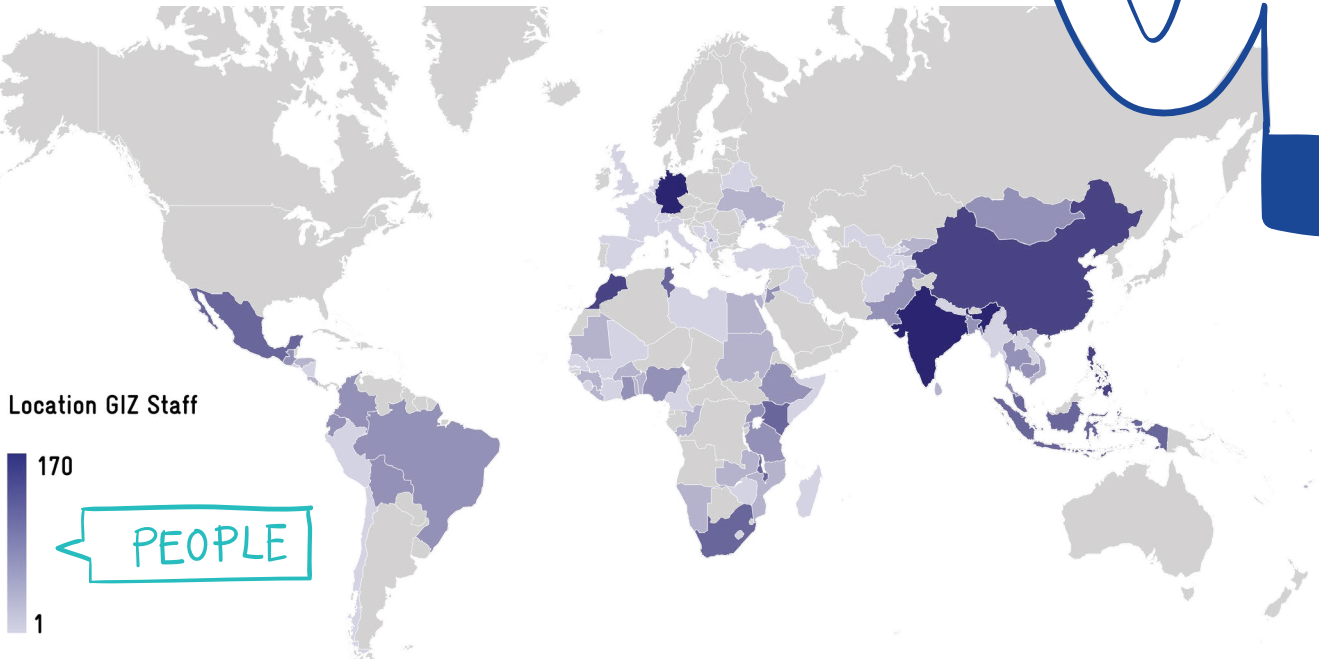
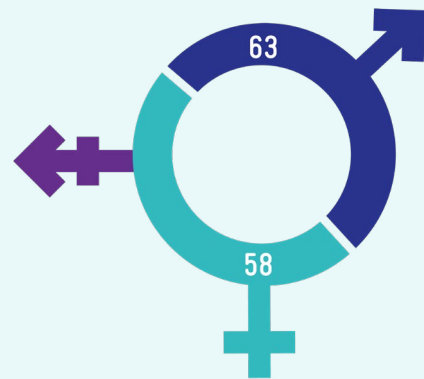Diversity in teams is a key success factor

Distribution of roles of participants and external partners in the Accelerator in the course of four rounds (2017–2022)

29 External Partners (EXT)

33 Field staff member (AMA)
Development worker (EH)

31 National staff (NMA)

28 Germany-based staff member (IMA)

Gender balance in the Accelerator

63

58

0 Diverse

58 Female

63 Male

WINNING TEAMS 2017

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.
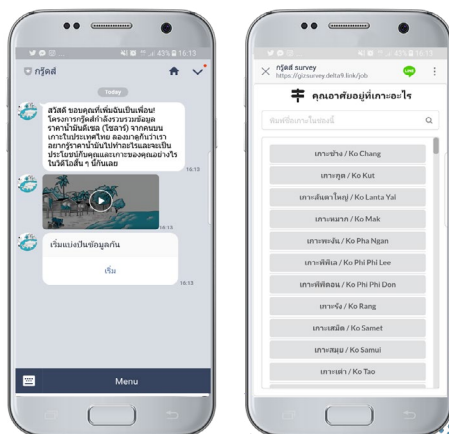
Piloting countries

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)

THINK PLAN DO!

Then please share the price with us, it only takes seconds...

Contributing to SDGs:

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Xtra Pay

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)
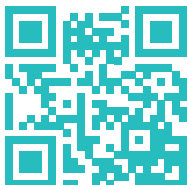
Contributing to SDGs:

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

WINNING TEAMS 2019

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 Nürnberger** (Germany-based staff| Germany), **Siri Snow** (Germany-based staff | Germany)

Contributing to SDGs:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

13 CLIMATE ACTION

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.
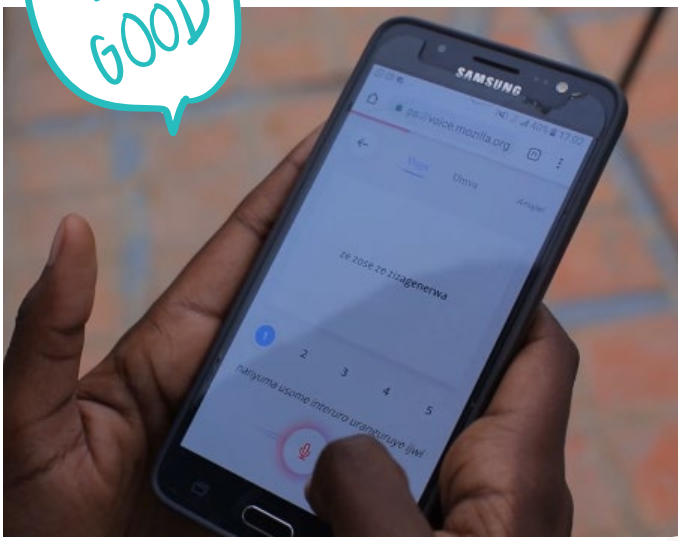
Piloting countries

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:

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

We are team "Voice"!

WINNING TEAMS 2020

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.
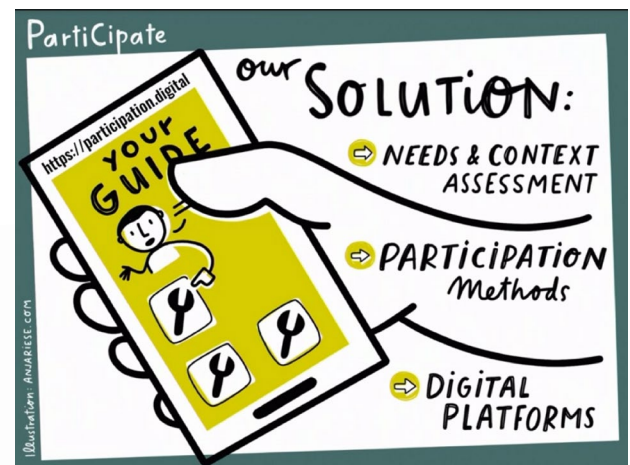

PartiCipate

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:

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

shERPa

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.

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)

Contributing to SDGs:

WINNING TEAMS 2022

Waste No Waste

Connected and determined
Team

Grace Zimba — Team Lead - Coordinator
Naomi Manjolo — Head - Research
Peter Schramm — Head - Business Development
Dr. Soumen Marty — Team Lead - Prototype
Crista Roth — Technical Expert - Fuels
Achim Kress — Environmental Specialist
Debaprasad Sah — Machinery Development - Prototype

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.
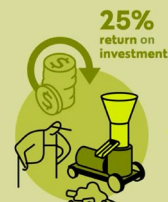
Team

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)

Contributing to SDGs:

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

We create positive impacts for various actors
Ecosystem

+1 monthly salary /year — Farmers
25% return on investment — Briquette producer
legal business — Distributors
reliable quality — Fuel user

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.
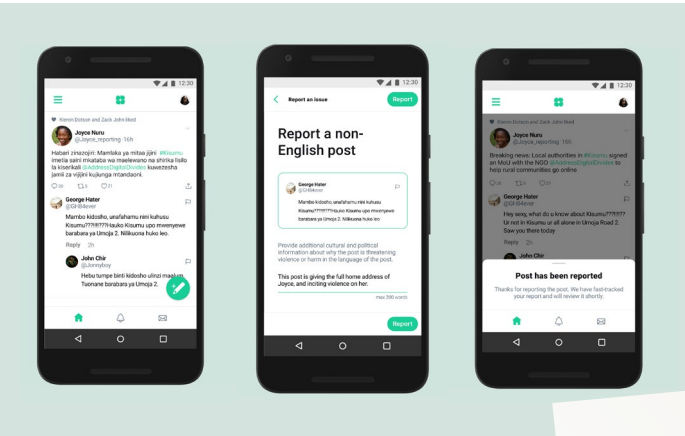
Piloting countries

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)
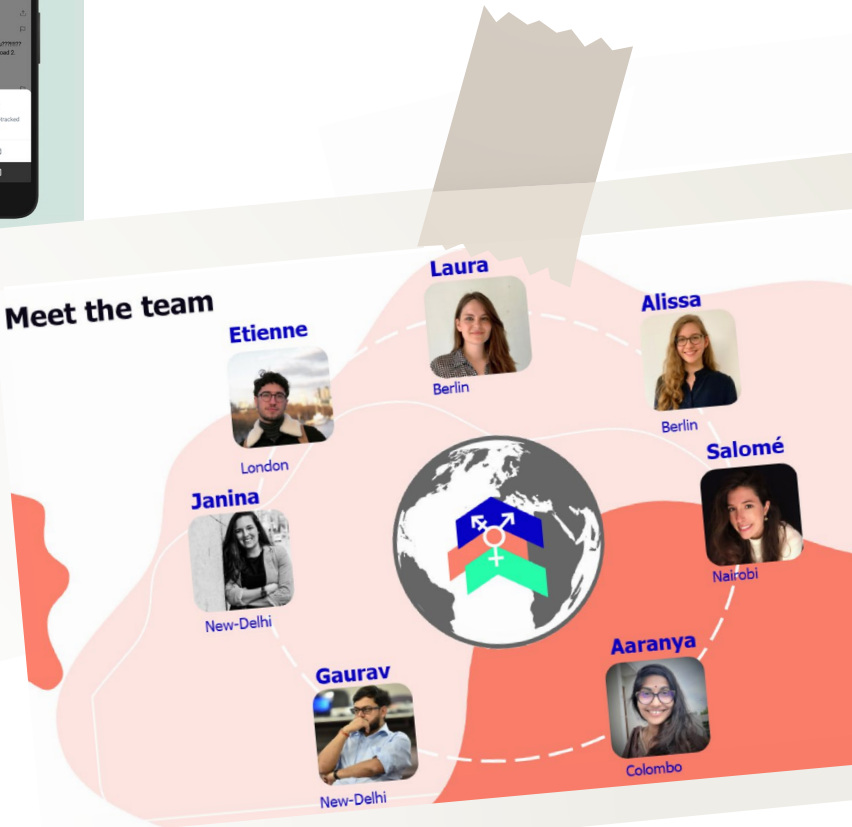
Contributing to SDGs:

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

5 GENDER EQUALITY

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

Meet the team

Etienne — London
Laura — Berlin
Alissa — Berlin
Salomé — Nairobi
Janina — New-Delhi
Gaurav — New-Delhi
Aaranya — Colombo

"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

Do you want to learn more ?

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Or contact us via: innovationfund@giz.de