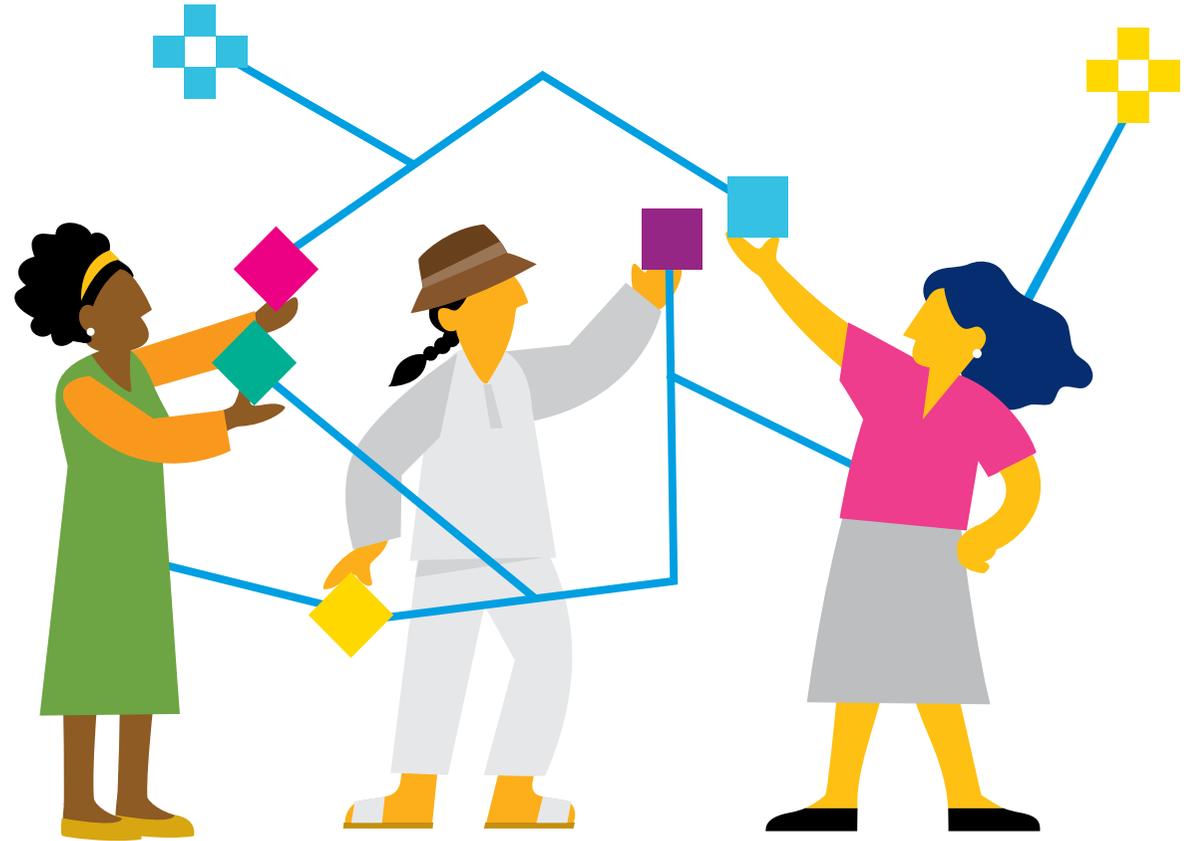




accelerator  
labs



# UNDP ECUADOR'S ACCELERATOR LAB WORK

January - December 2022

Co-building the  
Accelerator Labs as  
a joint venture with:



UNDP  
Core  
Partners

### Authors:

Ana M. Grijalva – Head of Exploration

Paulina Jiménez – Head of Solution Mapping

Enrique Crespo – Head of Experimentation

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# Executive summary:

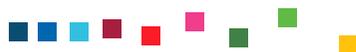
In 2022, UNDP Ecuador's Accelerator Lab work contributed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by mobilizing intelligence of all kinds to better understand complex problems, broaden the range of effective solutions, and running pilots to test the effectiveness of new ideas. Our work ranges from testing methodologies to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination with adolescents, to implementing base-line studies to promote digitalization.

Gender Based Violence and femicides are increasing in Ecuador, with underreported data that does not capture the extent of the problem, and a slow and inefficient judicial system leaves families and communities in search of social justice. Ecuador's AccLab portfolio aims to deal with this pressing challenge. For instance, with the support of local civil society networks and within the framework of the Spotlight Initiative, we adapted mapping methods to create routes of memory, injustice, and community response against femicides, tracing a first step in a much-delayed reparation process, and strengthening survivor networks. Moreover, we have been working together with the Ministry of Education to implement dialogic methodologies, Brave Schools, to change perspective and behavior as a mechanism to prevent gender-based violence and discrimination in schools. Finally, Ecuador's AccLab has been entrusted with Violet Boots, which is a key project to communicate and transform Ecuadorian society into a more equalitarian one.

Ecuador's AccLab has engaged on different initiatives to craft tools and methodologies to strengthen institutional capacities. Thinkia - citizen lab is the first national citizen innovation lab, and it is one of the commitments of Ecuador's Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2019 - 2022. This Lab aims to generate an agile dynamic between government and citizens, to strengthen citizens confidence in public administration, and to jointly solve problems that jeopardize social welfare. My Future is Today is a platform that seeks to incorporate young people in conditions of economic informality into the social protection system, promoting decent employment. Finally, the Digital Readiness Assessment, is being deployed with the Ministry of Telecommunications, to provide the government with indicators and a clear path towards a more digitalized and inclusive Ecuador.

Improving livelihoods is fundamental given the lasting effects of COVID - 19 and the profound economic crisis Ecuador has been facing since 2018. For this reason, the AccLab has engaged in creating initiatives that generate new opportunities for historically disadvantaged groups. The Grassroots Innovation Minga was a highly participatory process of co-creation and testing of solutions to respond to challenges faced by herbal market vendors. This intervention culturally adapted Design Thinking Methodology to a popular context. Moreover, to close the digital gap in women and young people, Ecuador's AccLab is running a pilot bootcamp in Python and Data Analytics, to generate employability together with tech enterprises looking for new talent.

Finally, given the networked nature of the Accelerator Labs, we are currently working with our Regional Hub and Headquarters, to identify, replicate and scale successful learning cycles. We aim to deliver the results of this collaborative work by the end of 2023.



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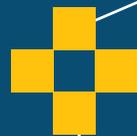
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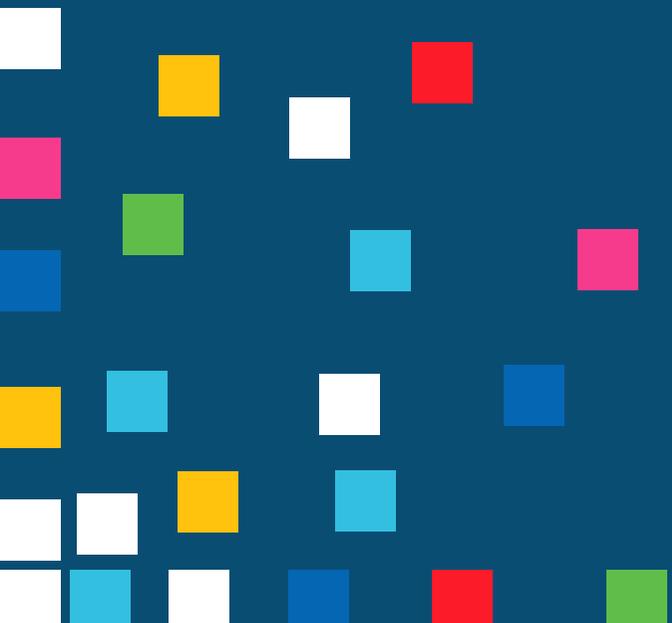
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# Portfolio one: gender and violence





# Action 1: Flowers in the Air





## Why does it matter?

The implementation of the Gender Violence Law has seen limited funding and there is a weak coordination between institutions established to address gender-based violence and help the victims. The insufficient number of Judicial Units specialized in gender violence means that prosecutors deal with all sorts of felonies, including gender violence, while they lack the gender perspective or knowledge required for an adequate approach. There is a significant gap in gender perspective training for justice system operators, and this is reflected in failed sentences due to stereotypes and biases when ruling on a trial. Effective training and immersion are urgently needed for justice and repair.



## Our work & results:

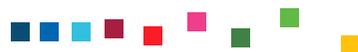
### Flowers in the Air- using the memory of femicide victims for awareness programs.

The Spotlight Initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean is focused on eliminating femicide. In the case of Ecuador, this initiative is implemented jointly by UN Women, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). In this context, Ecuador's Accelerator Lab designed an innovative methodology that combines social cartography adapted to digital maps to reconstruct memory with families of victims of femicide.

Flowers in the Air is a social mapping tool to digitally travel the memory routes of victims of femicide. It collects the experiences and testimonies of relatives, friends, organizations to honor the memory of these women. The narratives are expressed in the form of stories, photographs, texts which are georeferenced onto the neighborhoods, streets, rivers and significant places of the victims. On the maps, we can follow the routes, see the important places, and hear the voices of those closest to them - mothers, daughters, friends - who tell us their stories.

The routes seek to humanize statistics and remind us that, behind the numbers there are lives. It also serves as a symbolic service to their memories, as in many cases, there has been no formal justice. By making the testimonies public, the experience is taken out of the private sphere to collectivize mourning, because violence against women is a problem that concerns the whole of society.

Since the tool was [launched](#) in March 2022, with the support of our strategic partner, ALDEA Foundation, a total of 15 story maps were developed.



Flowers in the Air memory routes were included in a gender-based violence training directed towards 374 Prosecutors and disseminated to more than 2,000 justice operators through the State Attorney General's Office communication channels. To assess the level of awareness offered by the tool and its stories, UNDP Accelerator Lab generated a survey, with closed and open questions. In addition, to triangulate the results, two focus groups were led with prosecutors, men, and women, to delve into the responses obtained and analyze them by sex variable.

### Flowers in the Air Tool- Results 2022

#### **374 civil servants were trained by using a navigation tool**

- We sought to learn to what extent does navigating the testimonies: a) Mobilize new learnings and emotions, b) Contribute to grasping the dimensions of immediate and larger impacts of femicide, and c) Expand understanding of what comprehensive redress means from the point of view of families.

#### **From the training or navigation tool**

- More than 80% of officials would recommend the tool to other colleagues or their environment, indicating a high acceptance of it.
- Accelerator Lab's, [www.otrosmapas.org](http://www.otrosmapas.org) captures the attention of its browsers for a longer period than 87% of similar websites (over 8-minute navigation on the web).
- Regarding emotions or learnings after navigating the tool, the justice system officers reported empathy, followed by feelings of sadness and helplessness. Women refer to their own feelings after navigation, while men rather describe the situation.

#### **Flowers in the Air routes of memory**

- Currently we have 15 routes of memory and injustice that tell the story of 15 victims of femicide.
- Launch: the tool and methodology was launched in the cities of Quito, Cuenca and Portoviejo, 2 press conferences were held and a wide media coverage received with over 25 news, reports in press, radio and television.
- Flowers in the Air was displayed in the XIV Ministerial Forum for Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, co-organized by UNDP, ECLAC, and the Government of Ecuador, held in Cuenca, Republic of Ecuador, on 29-30 September 2022.



## Our partners:

### Government:



### Civil society:



## Reflections & Learnings

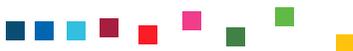
- Families' willingness to tell their story demonstrates that there is a need for exposing the truth and having their voices heard as an element of justice; Flowers in the Air has become a good practice and example of possible symbolic redress.
- Memory routes are useful for raising awareness among officials and the population, if quality navigation is carried out, accompanied by facilitation and subsequent spaces for collective reflection.
- Facilitated forum viewing is recommended, to facilitate learning and reflections, instead of self-administered online courses or activities.



## Related readings:

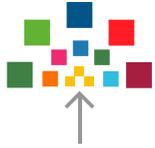
<https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-11/FLORES%20EN%20EL%20AIRE%20ingl%C3%A9s.pdf>

Platform: <https://www.otrosmapas.org/flores-en-el-aire>





## Action 2: Brave Schools



## Why does it matter?

School-related gender-based violence (SRGBV) is defined as acts or threats of sexual, physical, or psychological violence occurring in and around schools, perpetrated because of gender norms and stereotypes, and enforced by unequal power dynamics. There are different forms of SRGBV and often these forms overlap and reinforce each other.

Children and adolescents experiencing SRGBV see their well-being, physical and emotional health affected, ranging from low self-esteem and depression, to early and unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections such as HIV. This violence also has a serious impact on educational outcomes, with many students avoiding school, achieving below their potential, or dropping out completely.

In Ecuador, between March and August 2020, violence in schools show: i) 11,404 cases of psychological violence; ii) 2525 cases of sexual abuse; iii) 2213 cases of rape against women; and iv) 1888 cases of physical violence against women. The education community (authorities, teachers, students, parents) is responsible for eradicating gender violence within schools to guarantee children's wellbeing.

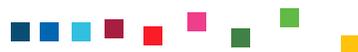


## Our work & results:

We tapped on the power of education to ensure that children and adolescents are protected from all forms of violence in their school lives. Education is an important socializing mechanism; thus, it is a vehicle for transforming individual behaviors and broader social norms around violence, gender equality and discrimination.

### Designing a behavioral experiment.

- We ran an intervention in the educational system to assess whether pedagogical methods can lead to changes in behavior and perspective regarding gender-based violence and discrimination among students. To know the impact, we measured the effects before and after the intervention in perspective and behavior mainly of students by using a randomized control trial evaluation. The intervention took place in one school in Cuenca and reached 150 students and 26 teachers.



### Using pedagogical methods to change perspective and behavior.

- We generated a safe space to dialogue and reflect about gender-based violence and discrimination within schools as a key mechanism to shed light on this issue. Once a week, adolescents met with their peers and the facilitator to share their thoughts and reflections regarding gender rules and stereotypes based on a reading selected for that week. A similar practice took place among teachers to reflect on how their teaching practices might be biased by gender rules. The exercise of collectively dialoguing and reflecting led to a change of perspective in students and teachers, in both cases gender social norms were analyzed with a critical spirit and challenged.
- We promoted the generation of a committee where students, parents and teachers discussed jointly which were the main problems and challenges faced by the education community and how school norms, regulations and protocols should be designed to handle them. This committee was responsible to generate the school policy of conduct and socialize the process with the broader student body to guarantee a participatory exercise.

### Obtaining outstanding results from the intervention.

- At the beginning of the intervention, students declared that they have “almost never” experienced gender violence at school or home. By the end of it, students reported that they have “most of the time” been exposed to violent circumstances at school and home. This change in perception shows that they are more sensitive to identifying violence and are no longer normalizing it. Another change in perception took place among the students regarding gender roles and stereotypes, and by the end of the intervention, they start challenging and criticizing the status quo of social norms.
- Also, our research shows that girls are more likely to experience psychological bullying, cyber-bullying, sexual violence, and harassment. On the other hand, boys often face higher rates of corporal punishment than girls and are expected to take it ‘like a man’. There is evidence that indicates that students experienced bullying or violence more often based on their sexual orientation, cultural background, and socioeconomic status.



## Our partners:

### Government:

Ministerio de Educación



### International academia:



## Related readings:

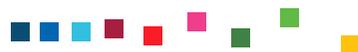
Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLNDs1TlNyQ&t=5s>

UNDP news: <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/noticias/el-proyecto-colegios-valientes-busca-prevenir-violencia-de-genero-y-discriminacion>

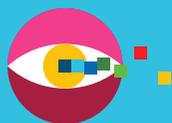


## Reflections & Learnings:

- To make schools a safe space there must be a zero-tolerance violence policy co-created by the education community and implemented collectively. Violence cannot be identified, stopped, and mitigated, if it is seen as the responsibility of authorities only. Students, parents, and teachers play a key role in creating a space that aims for no gender-based violence and no discrimination. Reading, reflecting, and dialoging have proved to be a great mechanism to create such space and sustain it in the long run.
- Worldwide there is a lack of quantitative data on SRGBV prevalence. Available sources differ in the characteristics of collected data, making it difficult to draw comparisons. Thus, this experiment excels at generating evidence. We used a mixed-method approach and a randomized control trial evaluation to assess the school community perception on gender violence before the intervention and after and across



time. We ran a survey at the beginning of the intervention and at the end to know how different types of violence (verbal, physical, psychological) are perceived and experienced by the students. Also, during the intervention we held focus groups and collected individual reflections of the participants. Finally, we observed how behavior changed during the implementation of the pedagogical methods, and how gender roles were questioned.



## Next Steps of the gender and violence portfolio

The Accelerator Lab will work on a robust portfolio for gender equality and violence eradication. Along with the Ministry of Environment, we will launch the campaign “Purple Boots” which seeks to call on institutions and citizens to commit to a free, full, autonomous, and equal life for women. Therefore, the boots are a differentiating element that vindicates the importance of women’s contribution to the country’s development. Beyond the symbol of the boots, Purple Boots is an innovative methodology based on Popular Education, which aims to raise awareness and capabilities to construct equalitarian societies that acknowledge the impacts of gender-based violence.

Also, as for Flowers in the Air project continuity, this year training will be focused on Judges and Prosecutors to increase their gender biases awareness and enable fairer sentences. Flowers in the Air methodology will be transferred to civil society organizations, to ensure that the know-how is extended scaled as a practice that contributes to families’ symbolic redress.

Finally, Brave Schools will aim to include in the current education policy all the pedagogical methods used as a mechanism to prevent school-related gender-based violence and discrimination based on practices that promote dialogue, reflection, and cohesion within the student body. We will advocate for this initiative to be scaled at the national level.



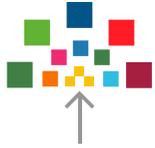
## Portfolio two: Strong Institutions

<p><b>16</b> PAZ, JUSTICIA E INSTITUCIONES SÓLIDAS</p> 	<p><b>17</b> ALIANZAS PARA LOGRAR LOS OBJETIVOS</p> 	<p><b>8</b> TRABAJO DECENTE Y CRECIMIENTO ECONÓMICO</p> 
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# Action 1: Thinkia – citizen lab





## Why does it matter?

Public innovation is bursting into the field of administration in a decisive way. The need to provide answers to social demands, to the technological revolution, and to the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires practical approaches for the complex machinery of public administration. The proliferation of Government Laboratories in Latin America is introducing changes in the ways of doing and thinking in public administration. Government Laboratories' jobs are to properly design new ideas and to conduct trials to test their effectiveness before implementing any improvement solutions. Conceptually, innovating in public administration involves "the creation of new ideas or services whose implementation generates a tangible return in the form of public value". Before allocating public resources to the development of a given public policy, it seems logical to know if it works. The relevance that this phenomenon is acquiring is worthy of being supported and promoted.

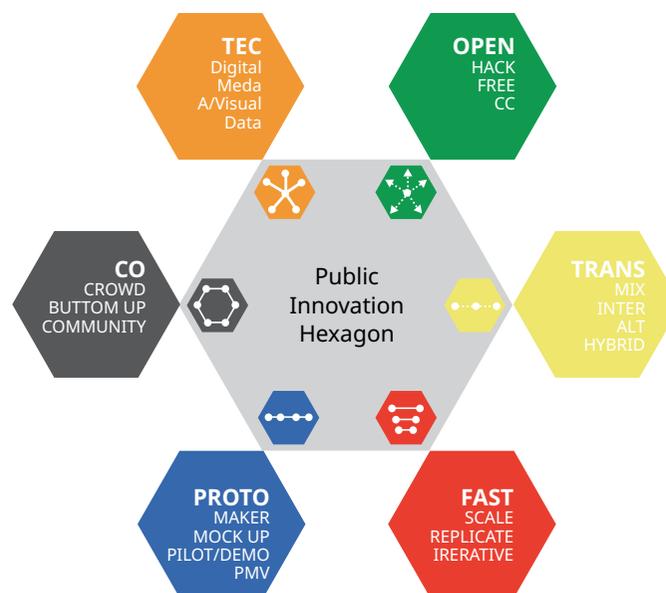


## Our work & results:

*Thinkia - citizen lab* is the first national citizen innovation lab in Ecuador, and it is one of the commitments of Ecuador's Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2019 - 2022. This Lab aims to generate an agile dynamic between government and citizens to strengthen citizen's confidence in public administration and jointly solve problems that jeopardize social welfare.

### Generating a long-term strategy for Thinkia's sustainability.

- To set up a citizen lab at the national level, a long-term vision was needed. Also, a management model and an operating strategy.
- To guarantee Thinkia's sustainability we secured the Secretariat of Higher Education and Innovation to take the lead in 2022; thus, Thinkia became a public intervention receiving public funds each year.
- Thinkia's management model is based on the *public innovation hexagon* principles.



Source: LAAB from Aragon - Spain

To operate the Lab, we convened a group of diverse participants from academia, the public sector, and civil society organizations to co-manage, co-fund, and jointly implement Thinkia's agenda. This consortium of participants gets elected every two years and UNDP is part of the 2023 – 2025 cohort.

For more details: management and operating model <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-08/Thinkia%20laboratorio%20ciudadano%20modelo%20gesti%C3%B3n%20%281%29.pdf>

### Using e-tools to facilitate citizen engagement.

- Thinkia - citizen lab has its own digital platform to connect more easily with the social and public innovation ecosystem with the government to work on specific development issues mainly through innovation challenges (Hackathons) in an open and collaborative manner.

## Articulating the innovation ecosystem.

- We implemented an innovation challenge called “Cannabis and Technology” along with the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and external collaborators to prototype an instrument for measuring tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in the field to improve hemp production and public regulation processes.
- We created an online course on “Open, public and social innovation” to strengthen public innovation capacities among diverse organizations within the innovation ecosystem.
- We guided the implementation of a social lab for San José Municipal Patronage Unit in Quito and co-led its first public innovation process that aims to improve the service given to homeless people. This is a clear example of Thinkia’s role as “trainers of trainers”.



### Our partners:

#### Consortium of actors:

##### Government:

Secretaría de Educación Superior,  
Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación



##### Academia:



##### Civil society:

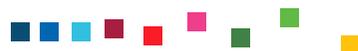


[dataLat.org](http://dataLat.org)

#### Counterparts:

##### Government:

Patronato Municipal  
**SAN JOSÉ**





## Related readings:

- Blog: <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/blog/moving-speed-trust-juicy-fruits-collaboration-and-persistence>
- TV news: <https://twitter.com/ThinkiaLab/status/1618732826966515715>
- Government web site news:
  - News 1  
<https://www.gobiernoabierto.ec/ecuador-cuenta-con-el-primer-laboratorio-de-innovacion-ciudadana/>
  - News 2  
<https://www.gobiernoabierto.ec/lanzamiento-del-primer-laboratorio-de-innovacion-ciudadana-del-ecuador-se-realizo-bajo-el-nombre-de-thinkia/>
  - News 3  
<https://www.gobiernoabierto.ec/equipo-responsable-y-contraparte-del-compromiso-del-primer-laboratorio-de-innovacion-entrego-plataforma-a-la-secretaria-nacional-de-educacion-superior/>

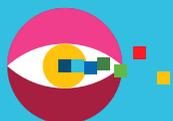


## Reflections & Learnings:

We put in practice how to articulate and consolidate an ecosystem for social and public innovation processes and here are the key takeaways. In a hunter-gatherer community, the most effective way to convene everyone is to make up a fire and gather around it. For this to happen, you need someone to start the fire and keep it going. This image applies perfectly to articulate an innovation ecosystem.

- The logs to start the fire represent the rigorousness of your technical proposal to convene different participants to work together. What are you inviting them to do? Is this aligned with their individual agendas and interests? What are they gaining by being part of this collaboration? You should respond to these questions before approaching the participants.
- The flames of the fire represent how active the community is and how often they interact with each other. What is the mechanism to manage this community? How is this community organized? What are the goals that the community is pursuing? What sort of activities and actions should the community be leading? It is key to have a management and operating model that explains what the purpose of the ecosystem is, what sort of work the participants should be doing, and what are the principles and values behind this work.

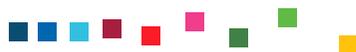
- Finally, the fire maker represents a participant or a group of participants that start and keep the fire going. This role has been performed by UNDP's Acc Lab. Who is convening? Is this participant related with others? Is there trust? How to persuade participants to work together with a bigger group of unknown entities? It is key to be persistent and keep an open negotiation with participants on how this collaboration should look like.



## Next steps:

Thinkia has four lines of action to focus its work for 2023:

1. Data and technology: supporting the generation and use of information, as well as the use of technologies to promote citizen participation in public decision making.
2. Innovation processes and methodologies: providing support in the implementation of innovation by using bottom-up innovation methodologies to promote collaborative and open work.
3. Training and replication: covering theoretical concepts, skills, and tools to strengthen open innovation among stakeholders, and facilitating the implementation of other Labs within the public administration at the local and national level.
4. Articulating the innovation ecosystem: Create and strengthen processes for the generation of alliances with actors from various sectors that want to join the work of the innovation ecosystem.





# Action 2: Mi Future is Today





## Why does it matter?

Today's youth face enormous challenges finding a job and earning a decent income. Around the world, youth are far more likely than adults to find themselves unemployed or in low paying, informal sector jobs. When youth struggle at the beginning of their careers the repercussions can last a lifetime. That's why it's imperative that we take concrete steps to ensure that youth have meaningful work opportunities and productive and fulfilling lives. Digital platforms have proved themselves as key instruments to offer opportunities to create employment, to generate growth and career development, and to provide decent work conditions and a living wage for young women and men.

Furthermore, UNDP in its efforts to support countries to build inclusive, ethical, and sustainable digital societies recognizes that digitalization is shaping the responses to face challenges in our world. UNDP supports partners in adopting a holistic and inclusive approach when planning and designing digital public policy. Digital has an impact on all of us: governments, businesses, and civil society.



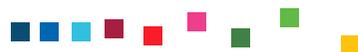
## Our work & results:

UNDP has implemented the inter-agency project "Expanding social protection for young people in labor informality". This initiative was implemented together with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women during the period 2020-2022, with funding from the Sustainable Development Goals Fund, and hand in hand with public institutions such as the Ecuadorian Institute of Social Security, the Ministry of Economic and Social Inclusion, the Social Registration Unit, and the Ministry of Labor.

As part of this project, the digital platform *My Future is Today*, was developed. This platform seeks to incorporate the young population in conditions of economic informality into the social protection system, promoting decent employment.

### Using e-tools to facilitate youth engagement and promote decent work.

- Mi Futuro is Hoy fulfills a double functionality. On the one hand, it allows young people to have access to a set of relevant tools to improve their labor situation. On the other hand, it collects information from users in an ethical and secure manner and makes it available in an open data format for policy makers working for the benefit of youth.

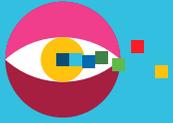


- The platform is designed to be used by three types of users: companies, “third parties” (academic institutions, civil society organizations, and public institutions, among others), and of course, young people.
- The functionalities of the platform were co-created and tested by young informal workers. The platform offers five tools:
  - Two smart search engines connected respectively to job search platforms and continuing education offerings to facilitate in one-click a match between what is offered and what is demanded by the user.
  - Two calculators generating information on the informal employment status of the young person and shares suggestions for improvement; and the other provides information related to issues of pension culture to promote the consumption of public information in an easy and agile way.
  - A data visualizer that offers comparative information between the user and his/her peers to invite young people to use the information generated by the platform.

Platform: <https://mifuturoeshoy.trabajo.gob.ec/>

### Generating a long-term and sustainable strategy for My Future is Today.

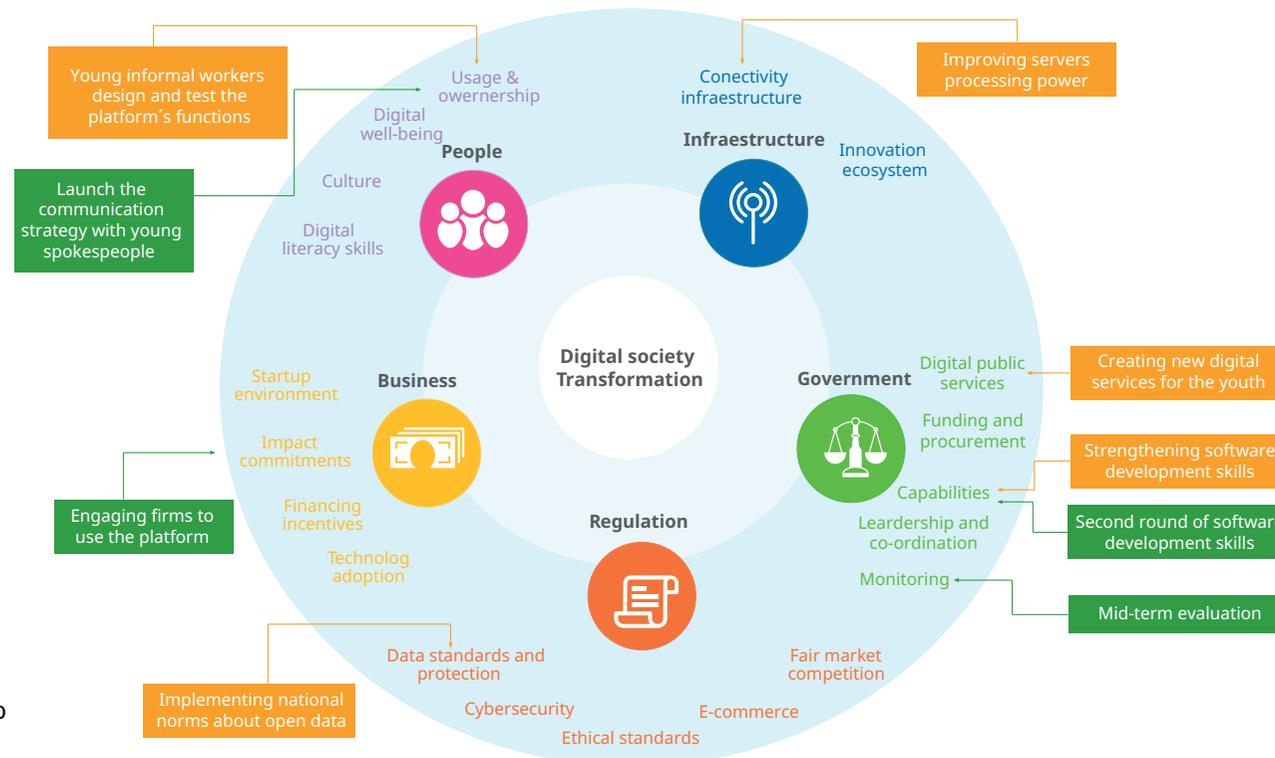
- *My Future is Today* has been handed over to the Ministry of Labor so that this platform is used as a main instrument of the public policy for youth employment.
- We have provided a comprehensive support to the Ministry to ensure that the platform has a whole-of-society approach (see graph bellow yellow rectangles):
  - In the infrastructure sphere, we improved the Ministry’s servers processing power.
  - In the government sphere, we provided new digital services to the youth and strengthened skills and capabilities of the Ministry’s technology team.
  - In the regulation sphere, we promoted the use of open data.
  - In the people sphere, we used a user centered design to include the youth in the design and testing of the platform.



## Next steps:

This year we will continue to support the Ministry's efforts to head towards a digital society transformation (see graph below green rectangles).

- In the government sphere, we will offer a second round of workshops to strengthen the technology team skills. Also, we will run alongside the Ministry a mid-term evaluation to know how useful the platform is for the youth.
- In the business sphere, we will design a strategy to commit firms to use the platform.
- In the people sphere, we will design and implement the communication strategy in the territory (dissemination among peers).



Source: Acc Lab



## Our partners:

### Government:

Ministerio de Trabajo



### UN system:



Organización  
Internacional  
del Trabajo



## Reflections & Learnings:

- This digital transformation has not been without challenges for the Ministry of Labor. These include issues such as fragmentation of systems and in the organization, lack of a strategic and consistent approach to the use of digital technology, lack of digital skills for efficient use of tools and technology among public servants, weak digitization, and automation of services.
- The previous graph shows that the Ministry of Labor is in full transition. Clearly a significant and much needed shift in public services to strengthen simultaneously infrastructure, government capacities, applying regulations, and involving business and people in the process.
- This platform aims to provide digital inclusion for young women and men in the informal market. However, going digital is a solution that aggravates inequalities between rural and urban areas, as well as those that exist among poor and wealthy populations in terms of accessing digital devices and a strong and stable connectivity, and having sufficient digital and data literacy skills.



## Related readings:

### Digital strategy

[https://digitalstrategy.undp.org/documents/Digital-Strategy-2022-2025-ABRIDGED-VERSION-PRINT\\_ENG\\_Interactive.pdf](https://digitalstrategy.undp.org/documents/Digital-Strategy-2022-2025-ABRIDGED-VERSION-PRINT_ENG_Interactive.pdf)



# Action 3: Digital Readiness Assessment

**PNUD Digital  
Readiness Assessment**



## Why does it matter?

Considering the impact that Digitalization has in our world, UNDP has set as one of its key objects to support digital development with partners and governments. To do so, the Accelerator Lab in Ecuador has been working with UNDP's Chief Digital Office, to implement the Digital Readiness Assessment, together with the Ministry of Telecommunications.



Source: UNDP's Digital Framework as presented in its Digital Strategy 2022-2025

The Digital Readiness Assessment (DRA) is a diagnostic tool to support Governments and Country Offices to conduct a rapid assessment of a country's advancement on digital transformation, providing scoring and recommendations across pillars of government, regulation, digital infrastructure, business environment and people/ skills.



## Our work & results:

The DRA has two key components: 1. It compiles all the studies, policies and guidelines that already exist from previous efforts by government, private sector, academia, and civil society. 2. It performs a survey of key stakeholders on digitalization, its challenges, and opportunities.

To perform the analysis, the Accelerator Lab has undertaken a mapping and stakeholder strategy to engage with the local digital ecosystem. This strategy has allowed the team to compile key documents that are being analyzed for component 1. In the second component, the strategy has performed within expectations with over 150 answers to the survey, including representation from all sectors of Ecuadorian society.



## Our partners:

### Government:

Ministerio de Telecomunicaciones



### Private Sector:



Local Governments:



## Related reading:

Digital website

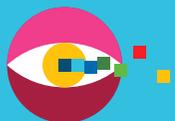
[Transformations | United Nations Development Programme \(undp.org\)](https://undp.org)



## Reflections & Learnings:

One of the key findings was that key indicators for this sector were missing. Without them, measuring impact and generating projects were almost impossible, or resulted in sporadic and disjointed efforts. We aim for the DRA to establish a concise guideline that allows Ecuadorian institutions and stakeholders to plan future actions, and tackle challenges with an eco-systemic approach.

For strategies such as the DRA to be functional, it is necessary to, involve all sectors of society, that involves different stakeholders in the making of strategies, plans and projects.



## Next steps:

The next steps for 2023 will be as follows:

- DRA study will be ready in May 2023 and we aim to launch it in June 2023
- Afterwards, we aim to build a series of potential interventions that close gaps/ take advantage of opportunities of the DRA analysis by the second semester of 2023.



## Track Three: Inclusive Livelihoods





# Territories that Heal: Medicinal plant market





## Why does it matter?

In Quito, the fresh product supply chain depends mainly on four wholesale markets which provide 63% of the total food crops available in markets and fairs. Despite their importance in supplying food to the city, the absence of public policies aimed at protecting and strengthening popular markets has caused them to weaken and lose customers, whose consumption patterns have changed. In fact, the number of chain supermarkets doubled compared to that of markets in 2019. The weakening or even disappearance, of popular markets is problematic given that they are places of production and reproduction of culture, care and life, mainly in the hands of women, who in this case, are over 65-years old in average and whose trade is at risk of not having intergenerational handover.

The “May First Central Platform” market has been operating since 1975, bringing together more than 250 merchants, of which more than 100 are herbalists dedicated to the production, collection and sales of medicinal herbs. It is the city’s main medicinal herb distribution center. It supplies intermediary merchants from other markets in the city, including supermarkets and businesses that use medicinal herbs for processing packaged herbs, teas, essential oils, cosmetics, etc.), as well as direct consumers. Wholesale, however, does not represent an advantage or greater profit. In fact, more than 85% of these producers earn less than the minimum wage. Intermediaries impose ceilings on prices and raise the final price by up to 200%.

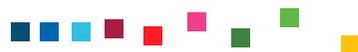
During 2022, we worked with this market and vendors with a *systems thinking* approach, unveiling the interconnections between herbalists and diverse ecosystems, ancestral knowledge, places of production and distribution, traditional medicine practices and practitioners, ancestral and communal ceremonial places, and lastly, the market, an urban space under dispute and pressure. In a nutshell, the importance of this intervention lies in avoiding the extinction of medicinal herb trade and its impact on all of the elements involved.



## Our work & results

The Grassroots Innovation Minga<sup>1</sup> was a highly participatory process of co-creation and testing of solutions to respond to challenges faced by herbal market vendors. The intervention culturally adapted Design Thinking Methodology to a popular context. Three thematic challenges were tackled: harnessing of medicinal plants, ancestral knowledge preservation, and climate change. The minga consisted of 4 stages: Empathize and define the problem, ideate, prototype, and test solutions with accessible technologies in a constant exercise of collective intelligence.

<sup>1</sup> Minga is a quichua word and an ancestral practice consisting of collaborative work to bring forward community needs such as the building of communal ditches, roads, planting and harvesting or any common needs.



## Results:

- 28 students from the National Polytechnic School (EPN) along with over 100 herbalists were engaged in 16 workshops and over 13 field visits for a deep immersion to understand problems through ethnography, solutions mapping, georeferenced mapping and other methods.
- 31 solutions were ideated and five of them become functional prototypes.
- A powerful, [Open Street Map](#) with several layers that shows municipal data along with crowdsourced georeferenced information on herbalists, recollection sites was collaboratively created.
- The [100 MEDICINAL PLANTS CATALOGUE](#), marked an initial milestone in the commitment to preserve ancestral knowledge linked to Andean medicine. The catalogue includes medicinal use for western medicine classified illnesses, as well as for indigenous ethno-diseases. Herbs are classified as “cold” or “hot”, according to Andean cosmivision.
- A solar oven prototype was created as a solution to harness excess plant production that is not sold in the market, and therefore, lost. Its results showed efficacy in humidity indicators (faster and cleaner drying methods). The prototype, triggered questions about the organizational model to dry plants collectively. In 2023, a group of herbalists will be organizing themselves to offer dried, processed plants directly to customers.
- A water irrigation prototype was tested that uses a humidity sensor for more frugal water use, reducing the cost from current \$3000 to \$400 for a 500 m2 plot investment). Results can be read in Spanish [here](#).
- These results and infographics created resulting from an ethnographic research were presented in the Territories that Heal [Exhibition](#) in the City Museum which was been open to the public since August 2022 until May 2023.



## Our partners:



**MUSEO  
CIVIDAD** | Fundación  
Museos  
de la Ciudad



**Municipio  
de Quito**



**ESCUELA  
POLITÉCNICA  
NACIONAL**



## Related reading:

### Blogs:

- <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/blog/empatizando-con-las-hierbateras-de-la-plataforma-primer-de-mayo-primer-momento-de-la-minga-de-innovaci%C3%B3n>
- <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/blog/herbalists-jaguars-if-they-are-fine-environment-too>

### Report:

- <https://www.undp.org/es/ecuador/publicaciones/minga-de-innovacion-innovaciones-comunitarias-para-retos-de-las-hierbateras>

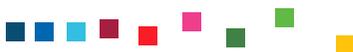
### Watch the video:

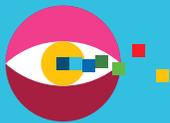
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5\\_PqqPJCok8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_PqqPJCok8)



## Reflections & Learnings:

- The extinction of this trade would bring consequences at several levels. A parallel can be drawn to an ecological concept: if herbalists are fine, like other “umbrella species”, the environment is too. They are closely related to ecosystems, culture, health, and life.
- Their trade and work must be made visible and recognized. They have a role in conservation and the empirical diagnosis they have on ecosystems by monitoring in their daily recollection practices is a valuable information that different stakeholders should consider for conservation.
- Prototypes trigger questions about the management model required to run a solution. It became evident that testing pilots is essential as technological artifacts only become solutions when built on organizational process, in this case, a cooperative one.





## Next steps:

2023 is a year to consolidate actions and reap the fruits of having new data and knowledge. The Municipality lacks disaggregated information on markets' waste production, as only bulk quantities are available. How much organic and inorganic waste does the May1st Platform produce? In 2023, we are collecting this data and plan to make the market be the first in Ecuador with a circular economy which composts its organic waste. A decentralized model is being designed for this pilot.

To harness excess production that is lost, a micro-network of distributing dehydrated plants will be prototyped. Reaching new direct clients will contribute to improve their livelihoods.

The irrigation systems that have been installed in two orchards will be evaluated in an experiment by measuring the time, effort and water saved.

We will also work in advocacy with new municipal authorities by bringing evidence of herbalist's contribution to the environment and providing recommendations for policy design: a) review of current fines for agricultural land use in peri-urban areas b) recognition or certification of herbal collectors c) Tapping into the composting experience to certify and create the market into a model.



Postula hasta el  
31 de octubre



## Potencia tu talento digital

Desarrolla tu potencial digital para  
entrar al mercado laboral

**Análisis de Datos**

**Action 2:**  
Digital Skills Bootcamp



## Why does it matter?

The COVID-19 pandemic affected working conditions worldwide, with a more significant impact on women and young people. According to the Ecuadorian National Institute of Statistics and Censuses, in April 2022, the labor market presents the following figures:

- Unemployment at the national level was 38%, with a higher incidence in women (4.5%) and young people (7.2%).
- Underemployment was 20.8%, with a higher incidence in young people (26%).
- The average income for women at the national level was US\$400.3 and for young people US\$375.7, considering that the basic family basket was valued at US\$728,68.

On the other hand, the pandemic accelerated digital processes and promoted the technology sector, increasing the demand for a skilled labor force worldwide. In 2019, the International Data Corporation noted that Latin-America had a deficit of 55% of programmers, and in Ecuador, this means an absence of 9,201 experts. According to the Interamerican Development Bank, these figures will increase, and by 2025 the regional economy will demand 1.2 million programmers. Moreover, the need for skilled labor is contrasted with the large gender gap in the sector. UN Women data (2022) showed that the representation of women in the tech industry is lower than 22%.

The project aims to improve women and young people's programming and digital skills to promote employment opportunities. Finally, by reducing the gender gap in the tech industry in Ecuador, we aim to generate good governance and foster inclusive growth in its ecosystem.



## Our work & results:

The project has promoted employment opportunities for women and young people in the technology sector through three outputs:

Output 1, Private sector mapping: to identify the positions that companies require in the fields of programming and digitalization. The Ecuadorian Chamber of innovation and technology (CITEC) has been an ally in this process. This mapping also served as an input to develop the digital skills Bootcamp syllabus managed by UNDP. As such, the learning process has been customised to the needs of the technological sector in Ecuador.

Output 2, Digital Skills Bootcamp: a six-month UNDP Bootcamp is being implemented to provide digital skills (python and data analytics) to 60 participants to improve their employment opportunities. This process has included mentoring hours provided by CITEC members, related to technology SMEs and digital start-ups. Moreover, the agreement with CITEC will allow UNDP to identify partners to guarantee employability options for the participants of the Bootcamp.

Output 3, Technology job fair: at the end of the training process, participants will access job offers in the technology sector through a job fair developed by UNDP and CITEC. Hence, generating a virtuous cycle of employment for women and young people.

Some of our KPIs include:

- At least 20 local SMEs and start-ups have participated in the private sector mapping for technology hiring requirements.
- At least 60% of the boot camp's participants are women.
- At least 80% of the boot camp's participants are in the age range of 18-29 years old.
- At least 70% of participants will finish the Bootcamp successfully and be certified in digital skills.
- Local technology SMEs and start-ups will employ at least 60% of boot camp's participants.



## Our partners:

### Government:

Ministerio de Telecomunicaciones



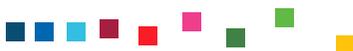
### Private Sector:



### Local Governments:



### Academia:





## Reflections & Learnings:

One of the key learnings from this process has been that there is an overarching need for involving the education authorities to fully tackle the challenge of employability in the technological sector. So far, bootcamps are successful tools to reskill and upskill talented individuals. However, given the gap that is already present and its estimated growth, it is necessary for these experiences to be upscaled and incorporated within learning processes in universities.

The alliance with the private sector has been fundamental to generate a cycle of employability that includes women and young people. By crafting the syllabus hand in hand with the private sector, it is guaranteed that the abilities that are being deployed are fully aligned with the needs of tech enterprises and startups, which will allow a higher employment rate amongst participants.

Moreover, the mentoring process, while challenging to deliver, mainly due to time constraints of participants, has proven to be a successful technique for enterprises to become acquainted with students, to assess their skills and capabilities, prior to providing them with job opportunities.



## Next steps:

The next steps in 2023 will be as follows:

- Bootcamps teaching process will be finished by the end of March.
- The closing ceremony and employment cycle will be held on the third week of April
- The results of the learning cycle will be presented in June 2023
- An upscaling process will be assessed jointly with private sector and academia in the last semester of 2023



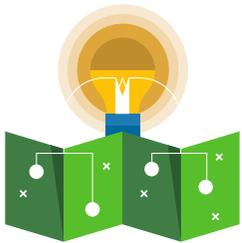
# Working as a network

17 ALIANZAS PARA LOGRAR LOS OBJETIVOS



7 ENERGÍA ASEQUIBLE Y NO CONTAMINANTE





## Action 1: Mapping worldwide energy solutions

Accelerator Lab Network launched a campaign to discover and deploy grassroots energy solutions to contribute to one of UNDP's Strategic Plan (2022 – 2025) objectives, that is to increase access to clean and affordable energy for 500 million people. In Ecuador, more than 97% of households have continuous electrical service. Despite these advances, there are still some 150,000 homes pending normalized electricity service. For this reason, we decided to participate in the campaign, recognizing that in a context of finite planetary resources, it is not only necessary to ensure access to energy, but the current resource must be clean, sustainable, and affordable, as indicated in Development Goal 7. Our network of 91 solutions mappers has discovered 359 grassroots energy solutions, 20 of them were contributed by Ecuador.

With these results, the AccLab Network is amplifying grassroots-led solutions to move beyond business-as-usual top-down development programs. The campaign becomes a precedent for a *grassroots thinking approach* that uses ethnography for data collection and analysis to build knowledge and facilitate the direction of funds by investors and donors, and scaling or transferring solutions to contexts based on their appropriateness.

There are five different visualizations designed by Data Viz for Good collaborators can be explored in this link:

<https://www.undp.org/acceleratorlabs/peoplepowered/dataviz>



## Action 2: Regional Future Thinking Exercise in Latin America and the Caribbean

Horizon Scanning is a practical methodology to apply Strategic Foresight. Future-readiness is about identifying emerging signals and thinking about plausible futures to steer change in the right direction towards the future wanted 10 years from now.

We are currently leading a Regional Horizon Scanning Exercise in the Latin America and Caribbean region along with explorers from other Labs, UN agencies (UNHCR and ILO), and various organizations in the region to imagine the future of human mobility 10 years from now. The results will be used to trigger strategic discussions between country offices, the regional bureau, other UN agencies, and key organizations in the region to review plausible futures and act on these emerging signals in the coming years.

First UNDP's Strategic Foresight Report: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-03/UNDP%20Signals%20Spotlight%202023%20FINAL.pdf>

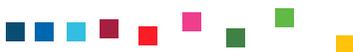


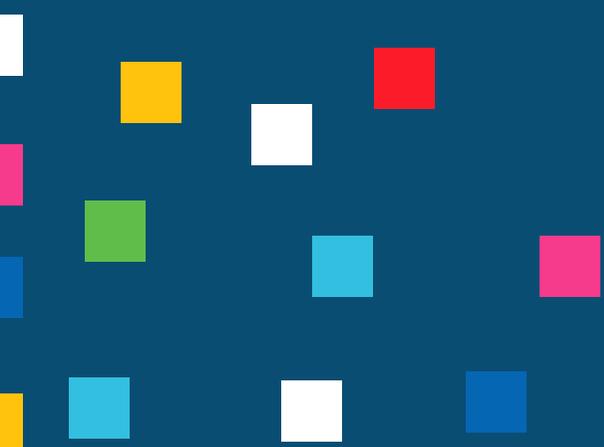
### Action 3: Prototyping the way forward, connecting local work with regional priorities

Ecuador's Accelerator Lab is currently working with UNDP's Regional Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean (RBLAC) to further integrate the experiments, knowledge, and methodologies that the Ecuador network possesses and align them with regional priorities. These priorities were established during the RBLAC Accelerator Labs Retreat in December 2022:

- Strengthening municipal capacities to generate scalable solutions and economic opportunities to address local environmental challenges (e.g., waste, water, transport, etc.)
- Understanding and connecting communities in disaster-prone territories
- Increasing women's labor participation in the green economy transition
- Increasing efficiency for social protection through digital technologies
- Rethinking public services and interactions for strengthening trust towards governmental institutions

To tackle these priorities, we are currently designing methodologies to create new solutions/make use of existing ones between regional experts and labbers from the region. We expect to perform the first work sprint by June 2023.





Co-building the  
Accelerator Labs as  
a joint venture with:



UNDP  
Core  
Partners