Challenge question

Do you have a digital solution that addresses the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Global South?

Background

The COVID-19 crisis had an unprecedented impact on our society. Regardless of speculation about what the "new normal" will be, no one is certain about what the future holds. The crisis has exposed the fragility of the current system's functioning across the globe but has also provided a powerful lens to examine the underlying conditions that led to this fragility, and illuminated gaps in economic and social values chains, providing provided the opportunity to improve economic resilience and related issues.

South-South Cooperation, coupled with embracing new and innovative approaches, present an opportunity to respond to the current health emergency and far-reaching socio-economic headwinds. Digital innovation reduces information and transaction costs, improves service delivery, creates new jobs, generates new revenue streams, and helps conserve resources. Since the beginning of the pandemic, innovators have been responding to the crisis with a progressive approach.

Challenge scope

The Global South COVID-19 Digital Innovation Challenge, in response to COVID-19, is co-organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC). The challenge will identify scalable innovative digital solutions that will enable countries, societies, communities, institutions, and individuals from the Global South to deal with the cascading effects of the pandemic – across governance, economic and social sectors, and wellbeing – and contribute to the organizations' respective focuses on South-South cooperation and digital technologies. The Challenge objective is to promote South-South cooperation by replicating or scaling up existing innovations with a potential partner/ country in the South. The Challenge will provide a mentorship scheme to increase the potential/ capabilities of the selected proposals/ teams to scaling up innovations across developing countries.

Eligibility

Only legally registered organizations/institutions from developing countries[1] are eligible to participate in this challenge. The challenge is open to governments, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs, private sector and start-ups, research institutions, academia, and civil society organization (CSOs).

Applying organizations/institutions must have an existing project or minimum viable product (MVP)[2] that:

1. promotes South-South cooperation by replicating or scaling up existing innovations with a potential partner/country in the South,
2. demonstrates a new innovative project/prototype, outlining its potential for scaling up through South-South cooperation, and
3. is a digital solution

[1] These include the least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries, middle-income, low-income countries, and countries with economies in transition

[2] An MVP is a product with enough features that can be used by early customers and receive feedback for future development.

Only one submission per applying organization/institution is permitted (in case of multiple submissions, only the first one received will be considered). All submissions must be made in the English language only. Applying organizations/institutions will be required to submit proof of their legal registration.

Applicants' projects/MVPs must fall into one of the following categories/topics:

Category/topic	Description of category
Enabling governments and communities to suppress the transmission of the virus	Use of technologies (such as AI, blockchain, IoT) for: • Social-distancing measures (e.g., logistics and distribution for local supply chains, digital aggregate platforms for food delivery) • Telecommuting solutions • Technology-based health solutions (e-health/ telehealth) • Learning and knowledge sharing through open educational resources (OERs), teleschooling (e-learning), etc.
Mitigating the socioeconomic impact and safeguarding people and their livelihoods	• Pilot or scale up digital cash transfers solutions • E-commerce solutions • Digital financial inclusion solutions • Digital rights- and security-related solutions with a special focus on vulnerable and digitally unserved groups • Food security and water management solutions • Incubating inclusive agribusiness
#RecoverBetter	• Preparedness measures (e.g., contact tracing, testing and surveillance) by governments and communities • Skills development and digital literacy solutions for small, micro, and home-based businesses (particularly those owned by women and youth in the informal sector) • E-governance solutions (digitizing government functions) • Renewable energy for healthcare solutions

Challenge outcome(s)

The Global South COVID-19 Digital Innovation Challenge aims to **build a network of champions** in developing-country ecosystems to:

- **accelerate** the response to the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- **grasp the current innovation impetus** and **bring innovative digital solutions** into international development, and reach out to entities which are usually in innovation's frontlines activities;
- **leverage** South-South cooperation networks, platforms, and funding mechanisms to achieve impact at scale through **sharing** and **replicating** selected innovations; and
- **provide open access** to resources from the international expert community and **build entrepreneurship capabilities** for innovators in governments, intergovernmental organizations, private sector and start-up companies, research institutions and academia, and CSOs.

Key dates

2 June 2021	Challenges launched
15 July 2021	Application deadline

05 August 2021	Candidates shortlisted [3]
August-September 2021	Pitch live event and final selection of proposals
1 -15 October 2021	Virtual boot camp[4]
19-20 October 2021	GIF 2021 and other events[5]
October 2021 to April 2022	Implementation period

Selection Committee

A selection committee of experts from ITU, UNOSSC and supporting partners will be convened to **shortlist the 20 to 25 best submissions**, and the final selected proposals.

- The committee will be composed of at least 5 experts, including outside experts and with at least one member from UNOSCC and one from ITU.
- The committee will elect a chairman, who will steer the deliberation for the selecting winning proposals. ITU and UNOSCC will provide the secretariat for the committee.
- The committee will first examine all submitted applications for initial evaluation to shortlist candidates based on the strength of their application and the evaluation criteria.
- All shortlisted submissions will be provided a **mentorship and training package** to prepare them for a "*pitch and win*" session.
- The selection committee will **then convene to select up to 10 winning submissions** based on overall performance and the evaluation criteria during a live pitching event.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria below will be used by the selection committee for both the **shortlisting of 20 to 25 best submissions, as well as and the final selection of the** winning submissions. Each criterion has been assigned a percentage weight for scoring.

- **20% for Relevance:** Incorporation of South-South and triangular cooperation as a modality for replications and scaling up to other developing countries. The innovation should demonstrate how it will increase peer-to- peer learning among the Global South.
- **15% for Adaptability:** Should demonstrate its adaptability and replicability to local context
- **15% for Sustainability**: Support sustainable and continuous response to Covid-19 crisis and its short or long-term impact.
- **15% for Viability:** Demonstrate viability of the solution in terms of its effectiveness and feasibility
- **20% for Partnership:** Engagement with local partners in other developing countries to assure viability in local conditions, and to promote sustainability and scalability of the solution.
- **15% for Impact:** The innovation much showcase how it has the potential to impact lives and drive socio-economic benefit, most of all among vulnerable and excluded populations.

[3] Shortlisted candidates/ proposals must prepare to pitch their ideas in front of a selection committee for the final selection

[4] Only submitters of the selected award-wining proposals will be invited the boot camp where they will be provided with mentorship and training to refine their digital innovation

[5] Virtual attendance at other events may be required. Further information will be available by time of selection

Awards

The organizations/institutions whose submissions have been finally selected by the selection committee as the **winning proposals**[6] will, through their appointed representatives:

1. Attend a virtual boot camp to further refine their plans and their milestones (e.g., market entry, deployment, impact traction).
2. Will be provided with seed funding up to **USD 25 000**[7] to implement/improve/scale up their proposed solution(s), with mentorship and training support, in a new market (developing country) **by end of April 2022** (subject to the presentation of a sound budget and workplan with clear milestones and budget allocation. The seed funding will be applied based on progress of implementation.) Both the seed funding will be provided by ITU subject to the terms and conditions of agreements signed between ITU and each winning institution/organization.
3. Present virtually their digital innovation solutions/prototypes at UNOSSC's annual Global South-South Development (GSSD) Expo and ITU's 2021 Global Innovation Forum, where they will also share knowledge and explore opportunities for potential partnerships.
4. Be eligible for additional fundraising and resource mobilization support from UNOSSC through a crowdfunding window of the South-South Galaxy platform.

Additional Terms and Conditions for Participation in The Innovation Challenge

1. The Global South COVID-19 Digital Innovation Challenge (the "Challenge") is organized by the International Telecommunication Union ("ITU") and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation ("UNOSSC") (collectively, the "Organizers" and each, an "Organizer"). By submitting your application form for participation in the Challenge, you accept the present terms and conditions on behalf of your institution/organization.
2. You hereby warrant that all information submitted is true, complete, and up-to-date and that you are authorized to participate in the Challenge on behalf of your institution/organization. The Organizers reserve the right to verify your eligibility for participation in the Challenge as well as the accuracy of your submitted information. You represent that you are not related to any of the members of the Challenge's selection committee, and that none of your relatives (up to the third degree) is employed by the Organizers.
3. You/your institution/organization (as the case may be) will retain all intellectual property rights on the content of your submissions. However, by participating in the Challenge you grant the Organizers a limited three-year, non-exclusive, global, royalty-free right and license to use, reproduce, communicate, demonstrate, make available for public, display, and distribute the content of your submission for the Organizers' informational, educational or awareness-raising purposes, via printed or digital or online media, including the Organizers' websites and the Challenge website. You represent that you (and/or your institution/organization, as the case may be) have the legal right to grant such license to the Organizers. You also permit the Organizers to use your name, likeness, video and/or photograph in connection with the Challenge, in any media, worldwide, at no remuneration.

[6] The final number of selected award-winning proposals will be at the discretion of the selection committee.

[7] Seed funds may only be used for prototyping, market entry, etc. They cannot be used for salaries, office supply, internet connectivity, etc.

4. The Organizers reserve the right to disqualify you if they reasonably consider that the information you have provided and/or your submissions do not comply with the terms, instructions and guidelines provided in the Challenge website (https://cocreate.itu.int), the Challenge application form, as well as the present terms and conditions. By way of example, submissions which are not in English or which the Organizers consider to be off topic, advertisements for unrelated projects or otherwise not in accordance with the nature of the Challenge or the mission of the Organizers are subject to disqualification.
5. If your submission is among those finally selected by the selection committee, your institution/organization will be eligible to receive seed funding up to USD 25 000 for the purpose of further improving your selected proposal. The final amount of such funding will be decided after the completion of the boot camp by ITU, at its sole discretion, and its use will be subject to the terms and conditions of a separate grant agreement to be signed between your institution/organization and ITU. Notwithstanding the terms of such agreement, you will be required to provide updates on the progress of your implementation of your proposal over the course of the year up to three years. These updates may consist of responses to emails or telephone interviews. You understand and agree that the Organizers may create content based on your updates, such as success stories, blog posts, photos or social media postings which may be published on the Organizers' websites, the Challenge website, as well as other communication channels and made available to the public, at the Organizers' discretion.
6. You are not allowed to use the Organizers emblems or the logos of any their events in any online or offline communication, without the prior written permission of the respective Organizer.
7. All submissions must not: a. violate the intellectual property rights of third parties; b. be illegal under applicable national laws and international law; c. depict or incite hatred, defame, abuse, harass, stalk, threaten a specific person or social group, incite violence or conflict or otherwise violate the legal rights of third parties (including those of privacy and publicity) and d. violate the terms of use of any social media service, website, mobile application or any other platform used in connection with your submission. You agree to release and hold harmless the Organizers from and against any and all claims, expenses, and liability arising out of or relating to your (and your institution's/organization's) participation in the Challenge and the content of your submissions.
8. You acknowledge and agree that your participation in the Challenge is free of charge but does not entail any right to compensation of any kind or to reimbursement of any expenses incurred from such participation.
9. The Organizers are not responsible for any lost, late, corrupted, mutilated, or misdirected submissions, or submissions not received within the established deadlines.
10. You acknowledge and agree that the Organizers are entitled to modify the content of the Challenge website and/or the present terms and conditions and to abbreviate, modify, suspend, cancel or terminate the Challenge (partially or in its entirety) without any obligation (present or future), by notifying you via an announcement at the Challenge website (https://cocreate.itu.int).
11. The Organizers reserve the right to make all final decisions regarding the Challenge. Nothing herein shall be considered to be a limitation or a waiver of the privileges and immunities of the Organizers, which are specifically reserved.