A toolkit for setting up a **Call for Solutions**

Driving innovation through solutions that already exist

Content

Before you start

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit wants to inspire and support our partners - ministries, NGOs and private sector organisations, by sharing experiences and lessons learned when scaling innovation.

- **How to use the yellow pages:**
  To provide hands-on support, we added yellow worksheets helping you to answer the main questions during the setup and running of the project.
  We recommend that you work on them collaboratively in group sessions: first, come up individually with your answers, then share and discuss your answers in the group.

- **How to use the blue pages:**
  We want you to learn from our experiences so we share lessons learned and details from our project in Kigeme, Rwanda.

In a nutshell: A Call for Solution to scale innovation

Instead of reinventing the wheel, GIZ opted for another approach: with our Call for Solutions we've designed a program to unravel solutions that have been tested and proven successful elsewhere in the world to now be adapted by local communities in a different environment.

How a Call for Solutions works

Through an international open Call for Solutions, solutions are identified that respond to a specific problem. The chosen solution owners are invited to hand over their solutions and share their expertise with local teams.

Supported by design and business coaches the local teams take ownership of the solutions and adapt them to the local context. Once a success, investors are invited to scale those solutions elsewhere.

The objectives of this approach

- build on existing knowledge and experience
- learn from other actors – large or small entrepreneurs, NGOs, social enterprises or private individuals
- foster the adaption of existing solutions to the needs of local communities
- improve the lives of local people involved.

Identify if this is the right approach for you

When developing this format, we had a clear objective in mind: scaling existing innovation. We found this approach valuable for challenges in:

- New and upcoming sectors and topics of priority
- Existing sectors or topics with lack of impactful solutions
- Combination of topics across sectors

Yet, we learned that this approach does not fit all contexts.

Result: If you can't tick all boxes, it might be an indication that this won't be the right approach for you:

- [ ] You know the needs of the people you are designing for and their context very well.
- [ ] You are willing to truly engage people on-site. You are happy to hand over some of the decision makings when choosing the solutions to be scaled to local people.
- [ ] You have the resources to train local people - both in entrepreneurship and in the required expertise to implement the solutions over a longer period of time.
- [ ] You have strong partners on-site who support the project - logistically and politically.

Glossary

Throughout this document we will use a couple of words that need explanation.

Human-centred design

Some people call it Human-Centred Design (HCD), others prefer to speak about Design Thinking. We don’t care how you call it, as long as users are represented throughout the entire design process.

User

Users are the people you are designing for - those people who will be using your product or service.

Prototype

Prototyping is to make your solution tangible in the simplest, most cost-effective way. The purpose of a prototype is to learn how users would interact and use your solution. With each prototype testing, your knowledge increases and the fidelity of the prototype can become higher.

Minimum viable product (MVP)

A minimum viable product or service is an implemented early version of your final solution that is stripped down to the bare minimum and most essential feature. However, unlike a prototype - it provides true value to your users. With an MVP, you can test how users actually use your solution.

Process overview

In order to identify global solutions and adapt them to the realities on the ground, we followed this process:

1

Set up

Before the actual project can start, there is a lot to organise. The main task is to engage stakeholders to get buy-in and permissions of the exemplary country to proceed.

A project team equipped with the right skills is set up. External experts like design and business coaches are found to complete the team if needed.

2

International Call for Solutions

The challenge is identified and the Call for Solutions gets published. Individuals, small and large organisations, start-ups, and businesses that have solved similar challenges in different contexts are invited to participate in the call. Once the call is closed, a jury decides which solutions are going to be developed further during the adaptation phase in an exemplary country under real-life conditions.

3

Adaptation to local contexts

In the on-site adaptation week, members of the target groups, as well as the submitters of the solutions, adapt the selected solutions to the realities on the ground. Experienced design coaches guide these teams through the process using human-centred design and participatory methods. Together the teams develop first prototypes of what those businesses, products and services could look like.

4

Product and service development

The teams continue developing their prototypes and test them with community members. The solutions will be iterated with the support of local design coaches. The adapted solutions will then be presented. Based on the core principles of the call and the viability of the solutions,minimum seed money will be made available to the teams. The seed money will then be used for the implementation of minimum viable services in the next phase.

5

Market and impact development

The prototypes will be developed further and implemented as minimum viable products or services that have a real impact. At the end, there will be a pitch presentation to international investors. The objective is to mobilise investments that allow the solutions to be implemented at scale in the exemplary country and beyond.

Set up

Objectives:

- Assemble the right people to form a team.
- Define clear objectives and judge if this is the right approach to achieve your objective.
- Agree on an inspiring clear challenge.

Content of this section:

Set up the team
Define desired outcomes
Engage stakeholders
Tips and lessons learned

Set up the team - the skills you need

Project manager

Who organises and manages the project, the parties involved and keeps an eye on the timeline. It might be helpful to have this person or a second project manager on-site.

Country experts

Who know the local contexts very well and who manage relationships with local partners and local stakeholders on-site.

Design experts

Who support the design of the call and who lead the teams through the innovation process.

Community manager

Who manages relationships with the people contributing to the call while and after solutions have been selected and who coordinates PR and social media activities.

Define desired outcomes

Before you start, your objectives need to be crystal clear. We don't want you to use this approach for the sake of it, but because it helps you to achieve your objectives. Be honest about what you as an organization want to achieve.

Result: Alignment on objectives in your team that can be communicated to others.

1. What does success look like for your organisation?

Be honest, when defining the desired change this call will bring to your organisation. What are the possible metrics?

2. What does success look like for you personally?

And yes, learning something new and wanting to make a real difference new could be desired outcomes.

3. What does success look like for your crucial stakeholders - those people who need to fall in love with the project to be successful?

You might not know this at this stage - so why not discuss this question directly with stakeholders?

Engage stakeholders

Engaging stakeholders is an essential step to deliver the call's desired objectives. Are their objectives aligned with yours? Let's start thinking about them early.

Result: A basis to develop a strategy on how to engage which stakeholders.

1. Who are your stakeholders?

Stakeholders are the people who have the power to make your **call** a success or failure. List them all.

2. Categorise and identify crucial stakeholders

High influence

People to keep satisfied. Demonstrate the call's relevance to increase their interest.

People to focus on, build good relations with, engage and communicate with closely.

Low interest

High interest

People to keep informed

People to involve and possibly share tasks with.

Low influence

Tips & lessons learned

Choose a country where you find supporting structures

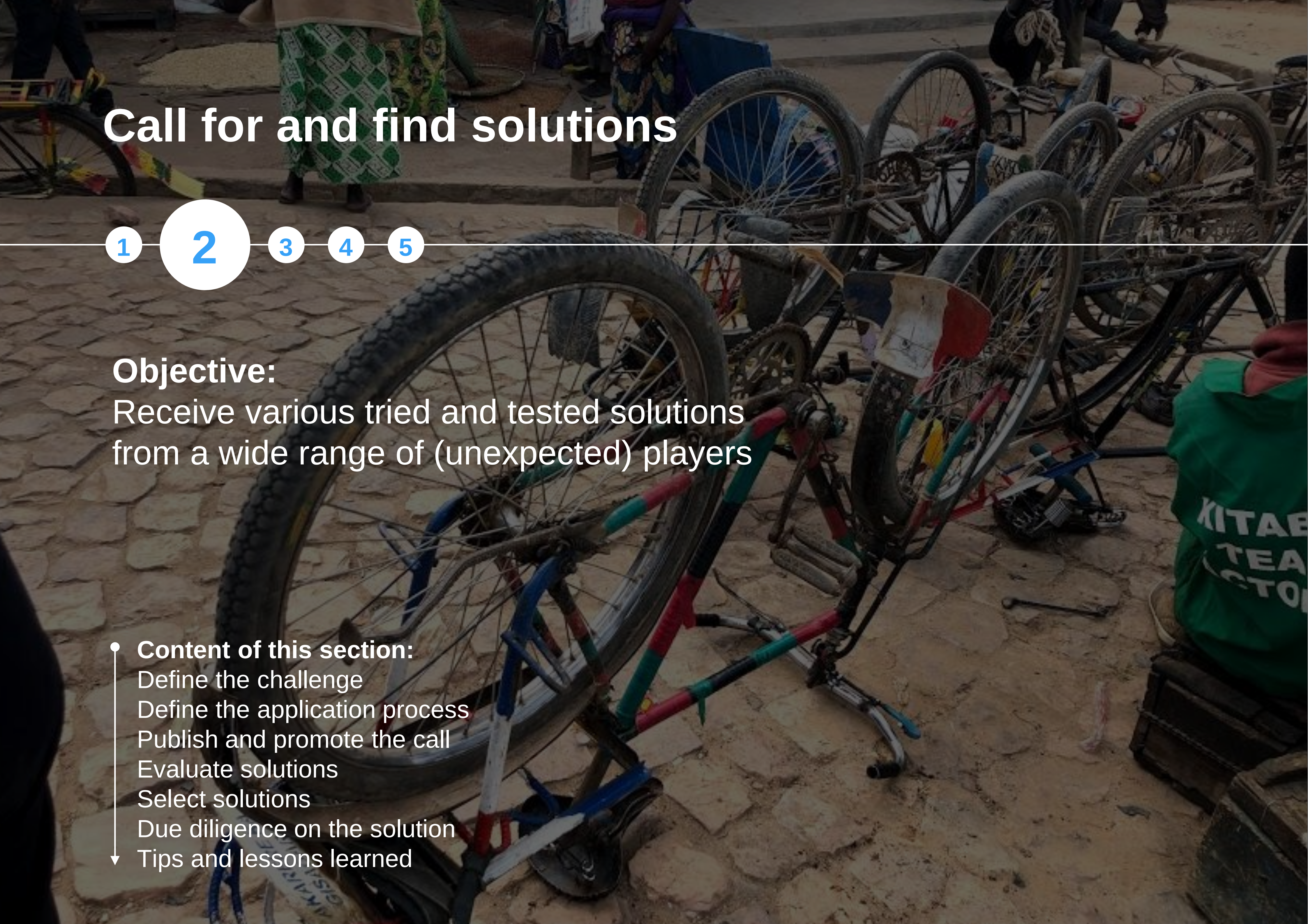
In Rwanda, we had an already established local network of supporters. Without the help of our local partners, this work would not have been possible.

Engage stakeholders

We aligned our objectives with the country's policies and the interests of main stakeholders for additional stakeholder buy-in and support

Take time to understand the context for possible solutions

If you are not on-site, visit the country where the project will take place to engage stakeholders, but also evaluate what kind of solutions would work.



Call for and find solutions

1 **2** 3 4 5

Objective:
Receive various tried and tested solutions from a wide range of (unexpected) players

Content of this section:
- Define the challenge
- Define the application process
- Publish and promote the call
- Evaluate solutions
- Select solutions
- Due diligence on the solution
- Tips and lessons learned

Define the challenge

A good challenge sets the user - the beneficiary - in the centre of the project. Choose one that is narrow enough to guide people towards what you are looking for and that leaves enough room to submit unexpected solutions.

Result: Test the "How might we" statements with stakeholders to iterate and choose one.

1. What are the problems from the user's perspective? Please write, as if you are the user and explain why this is a problem for you. E.g. *"I don't have the opportunity to earn money, because of a lack of resources and skills."*

2. Using a "how-might-we" statement provides a good structure for challenges. Use the problems listed on the left to come up with several statements following this syntax:

How might we… [support] …. [our beneficiaries] … [in doing something] … [to achieve something].

Define the application process

Evaluating options for hosting the call

- Before developing a new website to host a Call for Solutions, evaluate if partners have platforms you might be able to use. It might even be a good idea - especially if you are testing the approach - to use existing tools such as a blog to publish the call and emails to receive applications.

Defining terms and conditions

- Define terms and conditions to clarify all legal questions concerning the rights of use, winning conditions and all further questions.
- Create a prize that is attracting participants and is legally accurate.

Defining the application process

- Define the information needs from applicants as specific as possible to keep information limited but to the point.
- Align the information required from applicants with the selection criteria to allow for an informed assessment of all applications.

Test the application process

- Show the application process to people you`d like to participate to find out what they think of the questions and incentives.

Publish and promote the call

Exploit your networks

- Approach people directly who you'd like to participate in the call.
- Convince people who are multipliers and networkers to become an advocate for the call.
- Create a mailing list to keep people updated.

Use social media

- Use already existing communication channels and networks.
- If you create a new social media presence, ask well connected, existing players to promote and share the call.
- Get the help of a social media professional to create content and provide advice.

Evaluate solutions

Defining selection criteria

- Define a manageable number of selection criteria and communicate them to possible participants and the jury. A good practice is 3 - 5 selection criteria.
- Ensure that the selection criteria are clear and easily understandable by different stakeholders. Phrase the criteria in questions if possible.
- Use a simple scoring to apply the selection criteria. Test your selection criteria on a real example to make sure all information is available to apply them!

Assemble a diverse jury

- When selecting a jury, set a special focus on selecting a diverse jury: local knowledge, expertise, background, gender, age, etc.
- Make sure you include a variety of people who will benefit from the solutions - the user. Don’t only rely on representatives.
- Define the role, tasks, and necessary time jury members should provide for supporting your project.
- Keep all jury members informed about their role and updated about the progress.

Select solutions

Pre-selecting solutions

- Pre-select a shortlist of solutions based on the selection criteria and to match the local context e.g. weather conditions, social acceptance, …

Have a conversation with all shortlisted solution owners

- Before sharing the selected solutions with the jury make sure, that all solutions and solution mentors are reviewed thoroughly – otherwise, you might end up with solutions, that have not been tested or not had the impact promised elsewhere.
- Gather more information on the solutions during a conversation.
- Understand how much knowledge and training is needed to own the craft and expertise.

Let the jury choose the winning solutions

- Prepare a dossier for the jury with the top applications and a checklist for them to easily apply the selection criteria.
- Announce the winning solutions publicly.

Due diligence on the solution

Before a shortlist is given to the jury and winners are announced, make sure that the solutions have had the expected impact elsewhere. This template helps you to lead a conversation with the solution owner.

Result: Make a decision on whether you believe the selected solutions are good enough to be part of the shortlist.

1. What's your personal experience in the subject matter?

Think about professional training and years of practice. How many hours per week are you working with your solution?

2. How do you measure the success and impact of your solution?

Please provide us some metrics e.g. monthly profit, the number of users, people reached, etc.

3. What resources, hardware, skills, and experience are needed to implement and run your solution?

4. What preconditions need to be met to make the solution a success elsewhere?

Tips & lessons learned

Choose solutions for and by local people

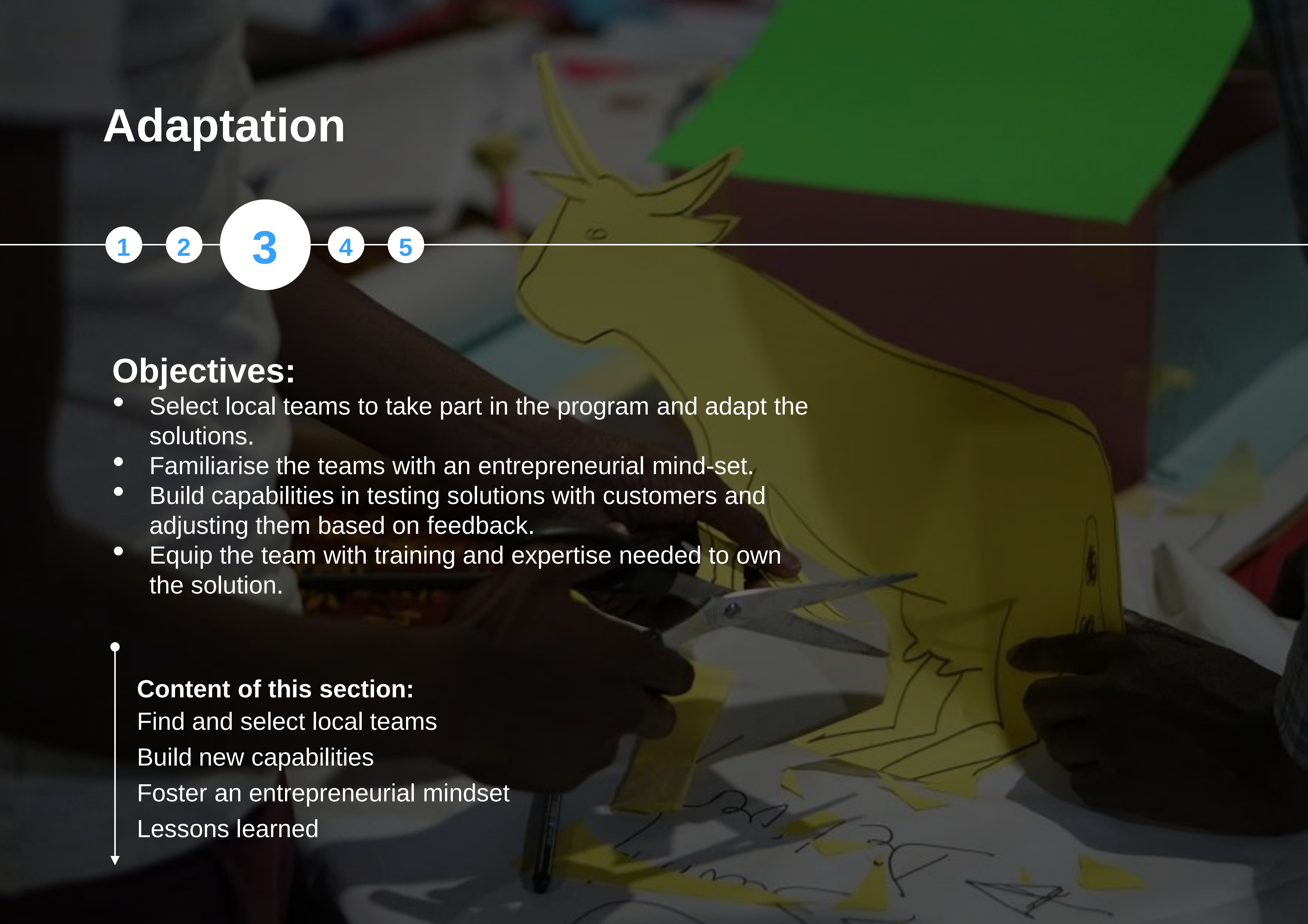
Successful solutions match the local context. Make sure that local people and people with experience on what's needed and possible on-site are well represented in the jury.

Take due diligence seriously

Once we started working with the solution owners, we noticed, that not all of them had the experience we assumed they had based on their application. Ask the applicants for underlying documents as proof of concept, for example impact data, business models and profit-loss statements to avoid selecting solutions owners that are not right.

Don't underestimate the training needed

Some solutions require more expertise and skills than others. When selecting solutions, evaluate how much training and expertise people would need to own the craft.



Adaptation

1 2 **3** 4 5

Objectives:

- Select local teams to take part in the program and adapt the solutions.
- Familiarise the teams with an entrepreneurial mind-set.
- Build capabilities in testing solutions with customers and adjusting them based on feedback.
- Equip the team with training and expertise needed to own the solution.

Content of this section:

Find and select local teams

Build new capabilities

Foster an entrepreneurial mindset

Lessons learned

Find and select local teams

Promote the opportunity locally

- Engage local authorities and organisations to spread the opportunity. Use locally used communication channels e.g. posters, public announcements, community meetings etc.

Keep the application process simple

- Keep the application process as simple as possible to make it easy to participate. Keep potential obstacles – such as high levels of illiteracy – in mind.
- Allow teams to form themselves and self-select which solution they'd like to own.

Select the teams based on skills and motivation

- Motivation and how the team will collaborate is essential. Meet the team in person and facilitate a design thinking day, to see the teams performing.
- If specific skills are needed to implement the solution, ask for references.
- Use a scoring sheet to assess the teams to ensure a fair assessment and avoid any influence bias by stakeholders.
- Consider equity aspects in the composition of the teams, such as nationality, age, gender, and persons with special abilities, etc.

Communicate winners transparently

- To ensure maximum transparency of the process, communicate the results publicly.

Application form for teams

It’s essential to meet the teams, even though you can ask for this information prior to the audition event - obviously translated to the local language. **Result:** If there are many applications, use this sheet to gain more information about those teams.

Who is part of your team? What‘s everyone’s age and gender? (You need 2-6 people in your group)

What makes you strong as a team? What are everyone's special skills?

What business experience does your team have?

Tell us one thing that you would change about the solution to make it work where you live.

Why did you choose this solution? What‘s your interest and expertise around that topic?

Build new capabilities

Prepare to adapt the solutions

- Review the solutions and determine with the solution owners which materials are required for the adaptation phase. Consider requirements for potential prototypes as well as the actual implementation of the solution.

Equip the teams with skills needed to take ownership of the solutions

- Plan for sufficient time during the adaptation phase to orient the teams on the solutions. It`s a good idea to have the knowledge transfer before the adaptation phase – especially with highly technical solutions. People will be able to think about the adaptation more realistically.

Adaptation workshop: Foster an entrepreneurial mindset

Brief the solution owners and participants

- Brief the solution owners before the adaptation phase about the innovation process as well as the context of the pilot country.
- Brief the local teams before the adaptation phase about their role and the expected outcome.

Assumption based testing and design

- Conduct background research on how the solutions might fit in the local context e.g. technical requirements, other competing solutions on the ground, user needs related to the solution, etc. These insights are helpful in the adaptation process.
- Ask the solution owners to define the key assumptions required for the success of their solutions to be used as a basis for the adaptation process. These assumptions are the ones that need to be tested with users through prototyping.
- Focus the innovation process on using an existing business model and adjusting it to the local context. Avoid a design process that starts from scratch.

Focus on the mind-set, not on tools

- Apply the design thinking process flexibly to lead to the desired outcome. Focus on key take-aways of the process for the teams – such as generating customer insights, analysing insights, and using them to iterate on the solution.

Planning adaptation workshops

For adapting the solutions, we hosted a series of workshops over the period of one week. The following questions will help you to decide how to spend the time most effectively.

Result: The results will help you to create a detailed agenda for the adaptation workshop

1. What do you want to achieve in the adaptation workshop?

We believe that a good outcome of the workshop would be a low fidelity prototype. Is there anything else, the teams should achieve?

3. How can you involve and engage users throughout the workshop?

Where would you find users to do research or to test ideas with?

2. What kind of skills and capabilities would you like to foster?

Design related skills can be built with the help of the design coaches - but what about the other, solution-based skills. How will those be fostered?

4. How can you foster a good working relationship between the team and the design coach?

The design coach will have a crucial role - make sure to invest enough time for them to build trust with the team.

Workshop templates

There are plenty of resources available online that guide through the human-centred design process.

Here, we gathered a few tools you might find helpful.

Result: The tools can help you to structure the activities and to generate the right outcomes.

User research plan
Empathy map
Insights
Personas
Idea napkin
Business model canvas

More resources to browse and be inspired by:

https://www.servicedesigntoolkit.org/
http://www.servicedesigntools.org/

Prototype

Prototypes help to get feedback on the solutions. If you can't get feedback on the "real thing", these questions help you to create something tangible that can be tested.

Result: Create a prototype of your solution based on this worksheet.

1. What assumptions do you need to test with users?

What are aspects of the solutions that require feedback most importantly?

2. What could the first and most low fidelity prototype look like?

What is the most minimal version of a prototype – ideally, created in less than a day?

3. Logistically - what needs to be in place to build a first prototype?

What and who do you need and where can you get it from?

Tips & lessons learned

Decide on the role of incentives

People need incentives to take part in programs like this. Think carefully about what incentives you offer and if they trigger intrinsic motivation or if they create a false reason to participate that can't be sustained.

Build new capabilities

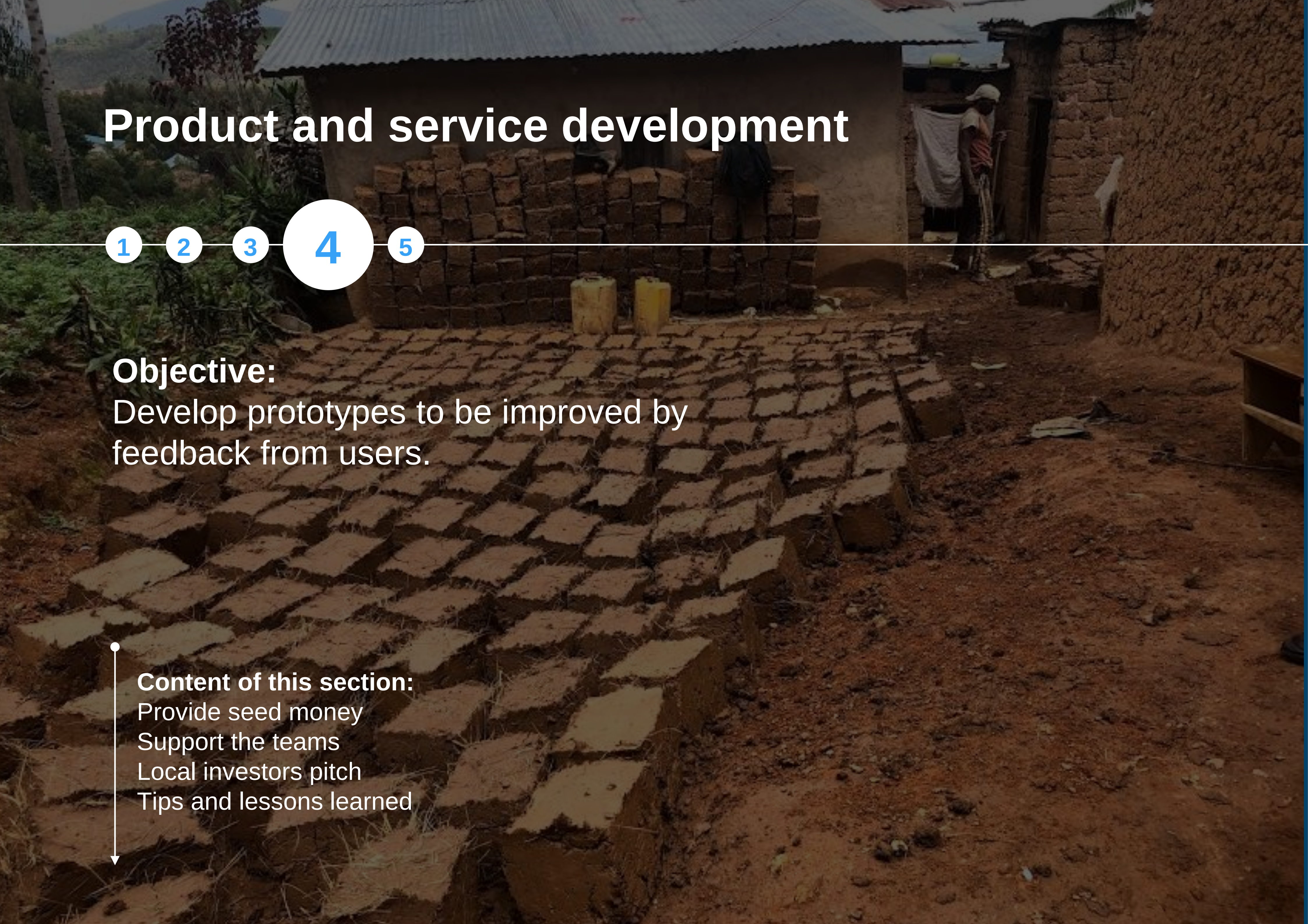
Both solution mentors or external trainers have an important role in building new capabilities. Provide enough time and support so they can be successful.

Show, don't tell

Limit theoretical content to the minimum and maximise the time for participants to practically work on activities.

Just translating won't work

During the adaptation phase, it is all about getting a designedly and entrepreneurial mind-set across. Depending on the translator, a lot gets lost and purely translating words won't work. It's less important to have the perfect translators, but the perfect design coaches who get the message across in their own words - adjusted to fit the local culture.



Product and service development

Objective:
Develop prototypes to be improved by feedback from users.

Content of this section:
- Provide seed money
- Support the teams
- Local investors pitch
- Tips and lessons learned

Provide minimum seed money

Provide seed money to the teams

- Develop a budget for expenses that are required for the initial implementation of their solution and testing of different assumptions together with the teams .
- Hold an orientation session with each team to communicate guidelines and standards of how to spend the seed money (e.g. payments only upon receipts).

Support the teams to develop the products and services

Provide tailor-made coaching

- If this phase is successful, it has a lot to do with the coaching provided by the design experts. Experienced design coaches can best judge what kind of support the team needs to advance their solution.

Test and iterate the prototypes with users

- Support the team to create a low fidelity prototype that can be tested with users. Analyse and evaluate the feedback received to decide how the prototype needs to be adapted to improve.
- Ideally, plenty of prototypes are created and tested until users are happy and the team is convinced that the service or product works. Each prototype will become more advanced.

Support for your teams - Ways of working

The team itself needs to figure out how they will work internally and has to kick-off this phase with their design coach.

Result: This agreement will define how the team collaborates.

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of each team member? This is not about creating a hierarchy, but dividing tasks based on people's skills and expertise.

2. What are your expectations towards your coach? What do you want help with? What's your preferred medium of communication?

3. How and when will you work together? Do you prefer meetings in person or remotely? How will you use the time together - to do the work or to divide to-dos?

4. Make a concrete plan - put dates and times in your diary and define what you will be doing.

Update on progress

To stay updated and to be able to track the progress using this template regularly helps the teams to reflect on their achievements and spot challenges that need to be solved.

Result: If you discover that there is only slow progress, use the opportunity to follow up and support.

1. How do you rate the progress of your business?

No progress at all — Exceeding expectations

2. Update on people using your product or service

How many customers have you had last month?

What was their feedback?

What have you been doing to gain more users?

3. What challenges were there?

What did you do to overcome those challenges?
Did it work?

4. How did you improve your product/service last month?

5. Please share relevant metrics how you were doing

6. Anything else you'd like to share?

Anything that was surprising? Anything you need help with? Any worries or concerns?

Local investors pitch

Find investors

- Together with the teams, identify investors that are active in the sector that the solutions are relevant for.

Prepare the teams for the investors pitch

- Design guidelines for the teams on what and how to pitch their solutions. This information can also be shared with investors before or after the pitch.
- Provide criteria that investors will use to base their decisions on.
- Ask the teams to specify the content of their pitch before the event using pitch guidelines.
- Plan for enough time to create and practise the pitch. Use multiple dry-runs to gather feedback and adjust the storyline.

Conduct the event

- Share information about the solutions with investors prior to the event.
- Provide networking opportunities for the teams and investors.
- Communicate the feedback and results of the pitch openly and publicly to the guests and investors as well as the teams.

Tips & lessons learned

Design opportunities to drop out

Some people will discover this approach is not for them. Provide elegant opportunities for them to drop out of the innovation process, without it feeling like a failure for them.

Provide hands-on support during prototyping

How things can be prototyped in a low and cost-effective way is not obvious for “beginners”. Make sure that you provide examples and ideas of what a prototype could look like.

Market and impact development

1 2 3 4 **5**

Objectives:

Develop prototypes further to create a solid minimum viable product or service that is of use and has an impact.

Content of this section:

Build local businesses

Support the teams

Provide access to growth opportunities

Build local businesses

Define the minimum viable product or service

- Together with the team, define the minimum viable product or service that their business will be built upon.
- Review the projected cost model to verify the business case and identify potential to decrease expenses or increase income.

Develop a budget for the business start-up

- Ask the team to develop a budget for expenses that are required for the start-up of their business. Included expenses should only be one-time expenses required for the start-up of their business.

Set up systems for business management

- Develop with the teams systems and procedures for the management of their businesses, such as financial management and operations management.
- Provide tools that the teams can use to manage their business.
- Ask the teams to assign clear responsibilities for the specified business management tasks.

Minimum viable solution

These questions will help you to define which features your minimum viable service or product need to have an impact and how you can evaluate its success.

Result: Based on this sheet, develop with the team a minimum viable solution.

1. What are the three essential features of your solution that will provide impact?

2. What are possible indicators to measure the impact?

3. Once tested and successful - how and in which order would you add features?

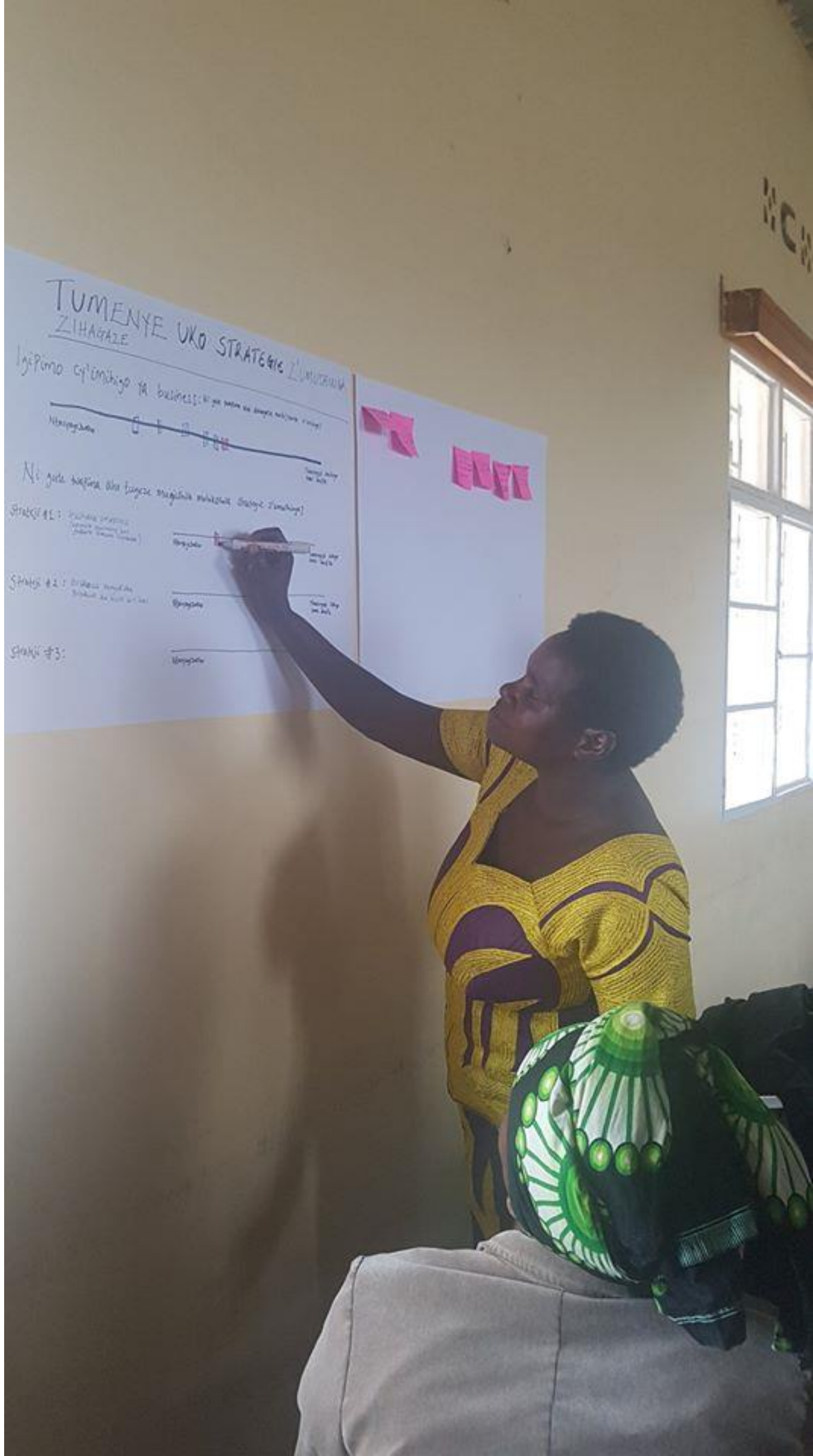
Support the teams to start their business

Provide business management training

- Assess the business management skills of the teams.
- Provide tailored business management training on topics such as financial management, operations management, and customer management.

Set business goals and track their progress

- Ask the team to set clear and measurable goals for their business development for manageable time intervals (e.g. every 2 months).
- Support the team to develop strategies to achieve their goals that can be implemented.
- Regularly review and analyse the progress with the team and plan for the next planning cycle.



Plan business goals and strategies

This template will help the team to set goals for their business development and strategize on how to achieve their goals.

Result: Based on this sheet, develop with the team an activity plan for the next time interval.

1. Set your goal for the next 2 months.

What is your target profit for the next 2 months?

What is your sales target?

2. Prioritise an action area to achieve your goal.

3. Develop strategies on how to achieve your goal.

4. List all tasks that have to be done and organise them in a schedule.

Week 1:

Week 2:

Week 3:

Week 4:

Update on business goals and strategies

To stay focused and to be able to track the progress, using this template regularly helps the teams to plan and advance their business development.

Result: Based on this sheet, set new goals and iterate on the strategies for the next time interval.

1. How do you rate the achievement of your goal?

Goal:

No progress at all — Exceeding expectations

2. How do you rate the achievement of your strategies?

Strategy #1:

No progress at all — Exceeding expectations

Strategy #2:

No progress at all — Exceeding expectations

3. Why or why not have your strategies helped you to achieve your goal?

Provide access to growth opportunities

Assess the business growth readiness

- Together with the team, assess their readiness for growth and identify their biggest need for growth, e.g. financial capital, equipment, training or market opportunities.

Identify opportunities for business growth

- Identify and connect with potential business partners in the market, including banks and microfinance institutions, leasing providers, training centers, or market exhibitions.
- Encourage teams to look out for opportunities in their network.

Match and prepare the teams for opportunities

- Select opportunities that are a good fit for the teams' business development stage and correspond to their needs.
- Communicate the potential opportunities and the conditions and requirements for these opportunities to the teams as early as possible.
- Ask the teams to submit to you the content of their pitch or any application documents for your review.
- Plan time for the teams to prepare to apply for such opportunities and to receive feedback and adjust their materials.

Tips & lessons learned

Coach each team individually

Each team will face challenges in setting up their business that are unique to their solution and team. Provide enough time and individual support for each team to understand the root causes of their challenges and to find solutions that work for them.

Do not baby-sit your teams

Even though there might be lots of stumblestones on their ways do not over-protect your teams by preparing everything for them and taking them too closely by their hands. In the end, only those ones with enough willpower, sufficient capabilities and a good team will succeed. And that is ok. You cannot expect all teams to be successful straight away.

Gradually phase out support

Business training and coaching is essential in setting up the teams for success. In the market phase, also ensure to create opportunities to build ownership and promote problem-solving skills within the teams.

For a chat about your project or more information get in touch:

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