UNHCR Innovation Service
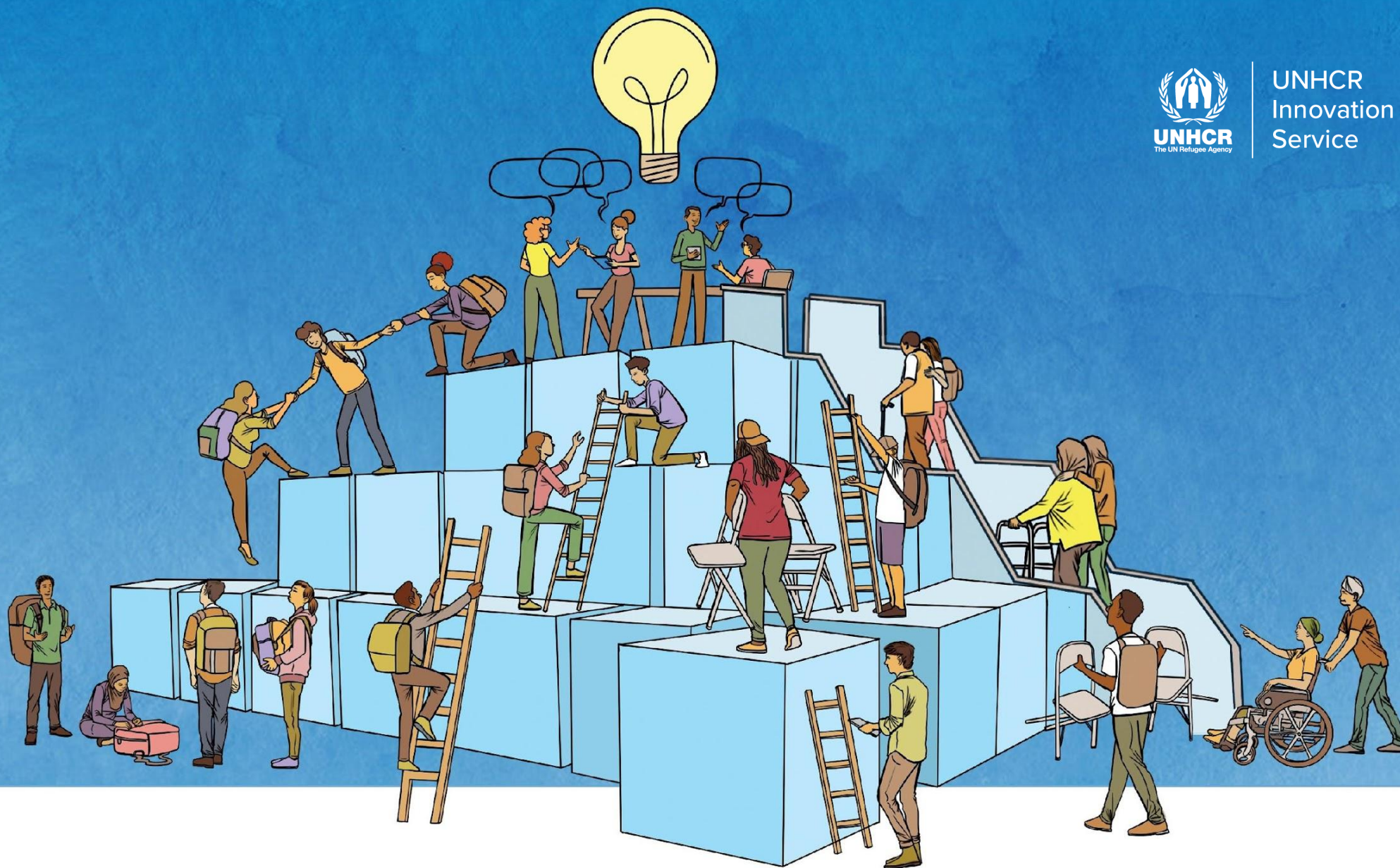
The Innovation Service is creating an **enabling environment** for innovation to flourish at UNHCR.

By equipping staff with the knowledge, resources, and skills they need to solve problems and deliver UNHCR's mandate in new and effective ways.

And working directly with forcibly displaced people to ensure they have what they need to identify challenges and create solutions.

Our Mission

UNHCR Innovation Service

Our **Innovation Programmes** support UNHCR to protect, empower, and include refugees in new and effective ways.
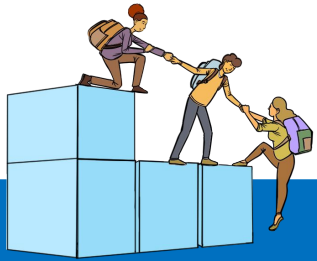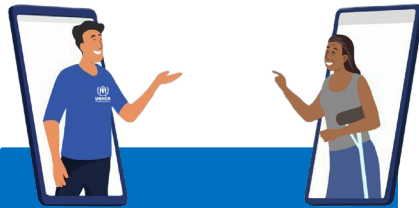
Refugee-led Innovation

Champions **creativity of refugees**

Fundamental **shift in programme architecture**

Supports UNHCR commitments to **Accountability to Affected People; Age, Gender and Diversity; +** the **Global Compact**

DIP, Digital Service, Transformation and Change
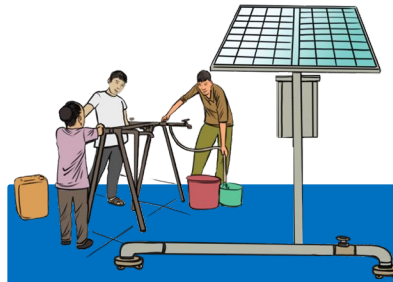
Digital Innovation

Pilots innovative **digital tools and services**

Explores digital **inclusion** + breaking down digital divides.

Protection in digital spaces

Lays groundwork for **UNHCR's Digital Transformation Strategy**

DIP, Digital Service, GDS, Transformation and Change, Luxembourg Gov

Environment & Climate Action Innovation

Builds **resilience** of displaced people

Environmental **sustainability across sectors**

Supports **UNHCR Strategic Framework for Climate Action** + **Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy**

DRS, DESS, OSACA, Transformation and Change

Data Innovation

Creative, responsible ethos on data + emerging tech

Everyone-aware approach to empower colleagues

Supports **UNHCR's Data Transformation Strategy**

DIST, GDS, Transformation and Change

Innovation Learning

Invests in **colleagues + partners**

Fellowship: 200+ people upskilled

Innovation Alumni Network: Community of innovation champions

Global Learning and Development Centre

Through four **Innovation Funds**, our **Programmes** provide innovators with **financial & technical support** to develop ideas.
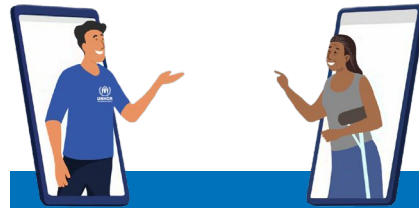
Refugee-led Innovation Fund

1,820
applications from refugee-led organizations

17
projects selected to receive up to $45,000

Digital Innovation Fund

70
applications from UNHCR operations

11
projects selected
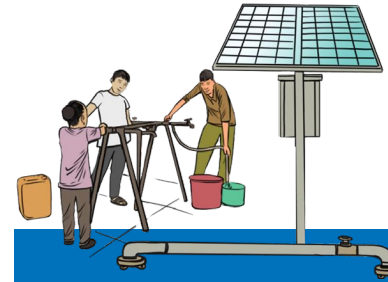
Environment & Climate Action Innovation Fund

140
applications from UNHCR operations

10
projects selected

Data Innovation Fund

87
applications from UNHCR operations

19
projects selected

In 2022 alone

2,100+
applications

~60
projects selected

$4.5m+
to support creative solutions to displacement issues

Each year, we'll invite more expressions of interest

The [Digital Innovation Fund](#) aims to bridge the digital divide, empowering those experiencing forced displacement with digital tools and skills.

The Fund provides targeted financial support and guidance to UNHCR country operations, to enable them to deliver meaningful and innovative digital projects designed by communities for communities.

Supported projects include:

Trainings on high-demand digital skills to facilitate self-reliance and increase prospects for complementary pathways in the tech sector

Livelihoods, education – Tunisia

Online careers counselling by the displaced for the displaced, enhancing access to work and study opportunities

Education, economic inclusion – Rwanda

Community-led connectivity network enabling a displaced Indigenous community to access information and secure temporary protection status

Connectivity, social inclusion – Colombia

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The **[Environment and Climate Action Innovation Fund](#)** aims to promote sustainability and enhance the resilience of forcibly displaced people.

The Fund provides targeted financial, technical, process, and partnership support to UNHCR country operations that are developing sustainable solutions to environmental and climate crises, in close collaboration with affected communities.

Supported projects include:

Nature-based malaria prevention, using locally available resources and supporting revegetation, in Polorinya refugee settlement

Livelihoods, public health – Uganda

Fog nets for displaced households to tackle water scarcity, promoting self-reliance and environmental health

Water security, environmental health – Peru

E-waste management and recycling to develop skills and clean up the environment in Cox's Bazaar

Environmental health, livelihoods – Bangladesh

Creating an enabling environment for innovation within UNHCR

UNHCR Innovation Service

The [Data Innovation Fund](#) explores creative ways to collect and use data to improve UNHCR's humanitarian response.

The Fund provides financial resources and technical support, alongside innovation methodologies and mentorship, to UNHCR operations exploring how to use data and new technologies to advance UNHCR's protection mandate.

Supported projects include:

Global early warning system on forced displacement, to guide planning and response across UNHCR operations and regions

Protection, partnerships – Global

Data analysis using AI, language processing software, and text analytics to improve community-based protection

Protection, preparedness – Afghanistan
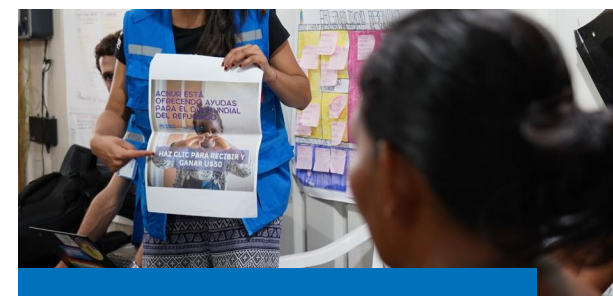
Behavioral analytics and social media to better inform crisis-affected communities

Protection, communication – Brazil

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The [Refugee-led Innovation Fund](#) proposes a fundamental shift in programme architecture by recognizing the key role displaced people play in humanitarian and development work.

It establishes **principled partnership** with refugees to ensure displaced communities have what they need to identify challenges and design solutions.

In collaboration with:
- **DIP Community-based Protection Unit**
- **DER Partnership and Coordination Service** (particularly Civil Society and NGO Unit)
- **Regional Bureaux and operations**
- People with **lived experience displacement**

The Fund supports the self-reliance of refugees, UNHCR's **localization** agenda, and our **accountability to affected populations**.

UNHCR Innovation Service

Refugee-led Innovation Fund: Flagship achievements

Takes a **by refugees, for refugees** approach – directly supporting refugee-led projects that will deliver long-lasting benefits to displaced people and host communities.

Connects refugee-led organizations with each other and with established innovation networks.

In ensuring refugee-led organizations can **access capital and networks**, the Programme **encourages others to invest** in these types of organizations and promotes the integration of refugees into national services and local economies.

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Projects currently supported through the **Refugee-led Innovation Fund** include

Aquaponics to increase food security and provide sustainable livelihoods for women in Dzaleka refugee camp.

Livelihoods, food security – Malawi

Training in museums professions for forcibly displaced people, opening livelihoods opportunities in the culture sector.

Social inclusion, intercultural dialogue – France

Cross-border initiative to monitor and improve health outcomes for returnees and those with chronic health conditions.

Health, disability care – South Sudan/Uganda

Eligibility for the Refugee-led Innovation Fund

The Fund supports innovation by refugees, asylum seekers, the internally displaced, returnees and stateless people.

Applicants are asked to apply as a team, usually as part of either a community-based organization or a refugee-led organization, as defined by UNHCR.

Both registered and unregistered organizations from all countries are eligible to apply.

What the **Refugee-led Innovation Fund** offers

- **Financial support to test and grow ideas**: Organizations can apply for up to USD $45,000.

- **Programme and project management support:** Grantees receive assistance from UNHCR country teams to troubleshoot challenges and facilitate local connections.

- **Technical support, expertise and coaching:** Specialist advice on needs ranging from technology to legal support and Innovation.

- **Peer-to-peer support:** Teams will be encouraged to meet, share experiences, learn from each other and explore partnerships.

- **Other support based on need**: To include organizational support, help with project sustainability and scale, training on specific topics, business model advice, and media and communications support.

- **An emphasis on learning:** The Fund will help grantees measure outcomes, assess the effect of their initiatives, and gather information to support growth.

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The **Refugee-led Innovation Fund** is now accepting applications!

Organizations led by displaced and stateless people have until <u>30 June</u> at 11:59 pm CET to submit expressions of interest.

For more information and to apply, please visit:

https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/refugee-led-innovation-fund/

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The UN Refugee Agency

Kyete Biingi Tai Nyeme (KBTN)

A refugee-led organization endorsed by UNHCR's Refugee-led Innovation Fund that is bringing lasting positive change to Nakivale settlement, Uganda.

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Kyete Biingi Tai Nyeme – KBTN

Who we are

- A **youth-led organization** in Nakivale, refugee settlement.
- Established in **2020**
- **Fighting food insecurity** and **global warming,** promoting **livelihoods** and **environmental action**

Enabling refugee communities to bring up morally upright, self-sustaining, God-fearing, responsible beings through **livelihood** and **environmentally friendly activities**.

Our mission

A free and **resilient refugee community** whose vulnerable peoples have access to quality **education**, **sanitation** and a **serene environment** to carry out economic activities.

Our vision

UNHCR Innovation Service

Kyete Biingi Tai Nyeme – KBTN

Our goal

To **restore African cultural and traditional values** by engaging the refugee youth in both livelihood and environmental protection activities to make them **self-reliant and responsible** people in the community transformation process.

Key principles

- Integrity

- Empathy

- Passion

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Kyete Biingi Tai Nyeme – KBTN

Our project

Challenge: The Nakivale refugee settlement has inadequate land to support farming and food production to sustain the population, while environmentally damaging farming techniques and limited capital to purchase tools, equipment and seeds create further challenges.

Solution:

- Establishing a **seed bank** and **community exchange system.**
- Creating **community gardens.**
- **Six communities** prioritized, benefiting **350 households.**
- **36 members** of Village Agricultural Committees.
- **Nine** team members receiving training on land use and project monitoring.
- Distribution of **seeds and gardening equipment**, to plant **30,000 fruit trees.**
- **12 acres of land prepared** for communal gardens in three communities.
- Installation of a **high pressure water pump.**
- **50 participants** of the "earn as you learn" programme.
- Participating in the **Livelihood, Energy and Environment (LEE) Camp,** organized by UNHCR and OPM.

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Kyete Biingi Tai Nyeme – KBTN

Expected results

- **2,400 farmers directly benefit** from the programme.
- **24 Nakivale villages** prioritized.
- Seeds and trees are distributed to **600 farmers each season.**
- **One community garden for each participating village.**
- Provision of **hoes, watering cans, and a water pump.**

Our partners

- UNHCR
- Office of the Prime Minister-Department of Refugees
- Independent Council for Ecosystem Restoration - Australia
- Her Dreams Count - Uganda
- Now and Tomorrow - Uganda
- NGOs

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Kyete Biingi Tai Nyeme – KBTN

Our experience working with UNHCR

- It has helped us **standardize procedures.**
- It has **strengthened** our **technical capacity** and **networking skills.**
- It has **empowered community members** as **agents of change.**

Benefits of working with RLOs for UNHCR

- It's **cost effective.**
- **Bottom-up** approaches to **needs identification** and **problem solving**.
- Ensures resources **reach people in most vulnerable conditions**.

Recommendations for RLOs

- Focus on **impact** rather than visibility.
- **Connect with other organizations and partners** locally and beyond.
- Share **knowledge** and **experiences**.
- Enhance **project sustainability.**

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Experiences from Data Innovation Fund project partnering with UNHCR's Connected Education team

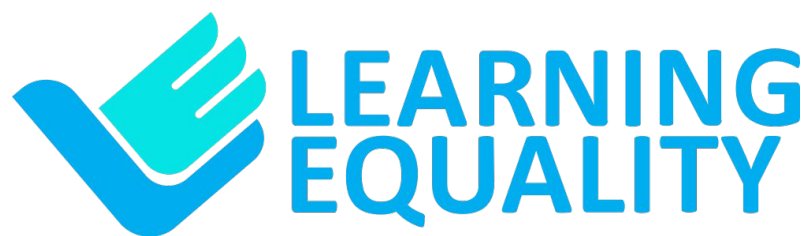Lewa Downs Primary at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy | Kenya

Lewa Downs Primary at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy | Kenya
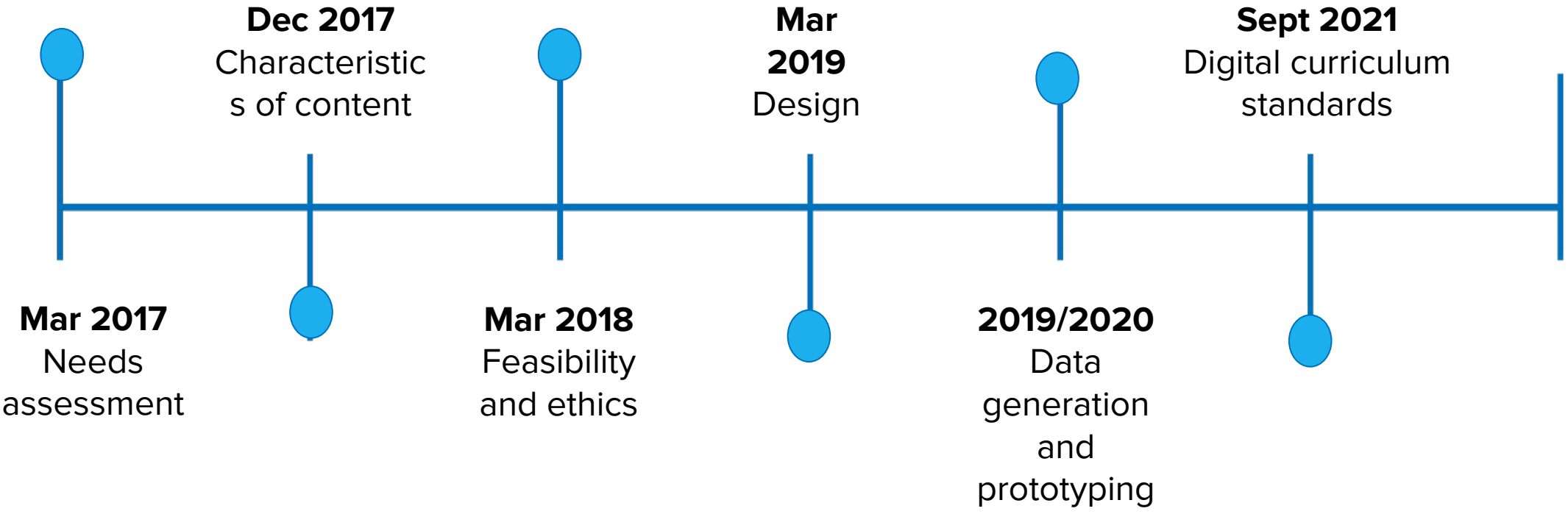

Agami | Bangladesh

Shoulder to Shoulder | Honduras

LEARNING EQUALITY

UNHCR Innovation Service

Project Origins

- Shared strategic focus to ensure all refugees and host communities have access to relevant, quality digital learning opportunities

- Collective experiences through Instant Network Schools programme and implementation of Kolibri and the importance of curriculum alignment

- Challenges in organizing digital content according to curricula
  - Time and resource intensive
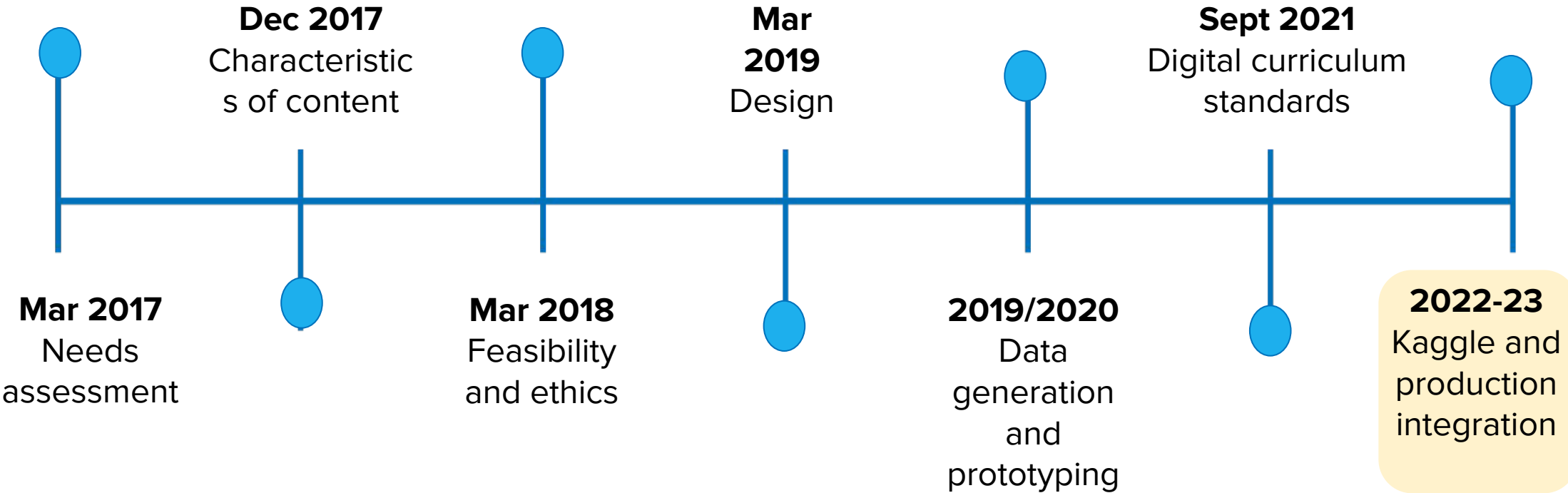 - Need for updates when new digital content is identified or curricula changes

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Mar 2017
Needs assessment

Dec 2017
Characteristics of content

Mar 2018
Feasibility and ethics

Mar 2019
Design

2019/2020
Data generation and prototyping

Sept 2021
Digital curriculum standards

Vodafone Foundation

UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency

LEARNING EQUALITY

Member of COVID-19 Global Education Coalition Launched by UNESCO

With Support From Google.org

Learn more:
https://rocdata.global/pages/background/

Co-Designing with UNHCR

UNHCR
Innovation
Service

Mar 2017
Needs assessment

Dec 2017
Characteristics of content

Mar 2018
Feasibility and ethics

Mar 2019
Design

2019/2020
Data generation and prototyping

Sept 2021
Digital curriculum standards

2022-23
Kaggle and production integration
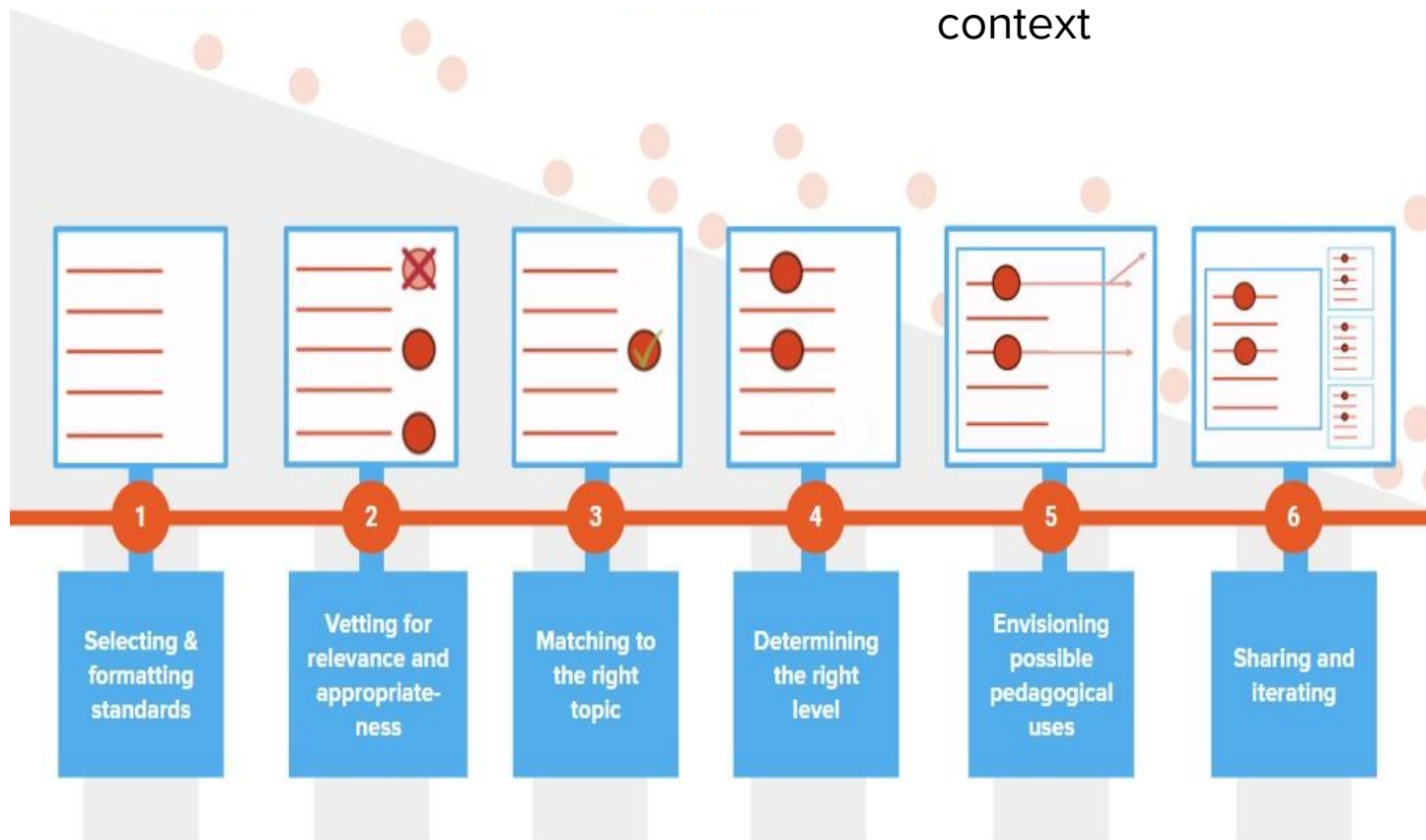
Learn more:
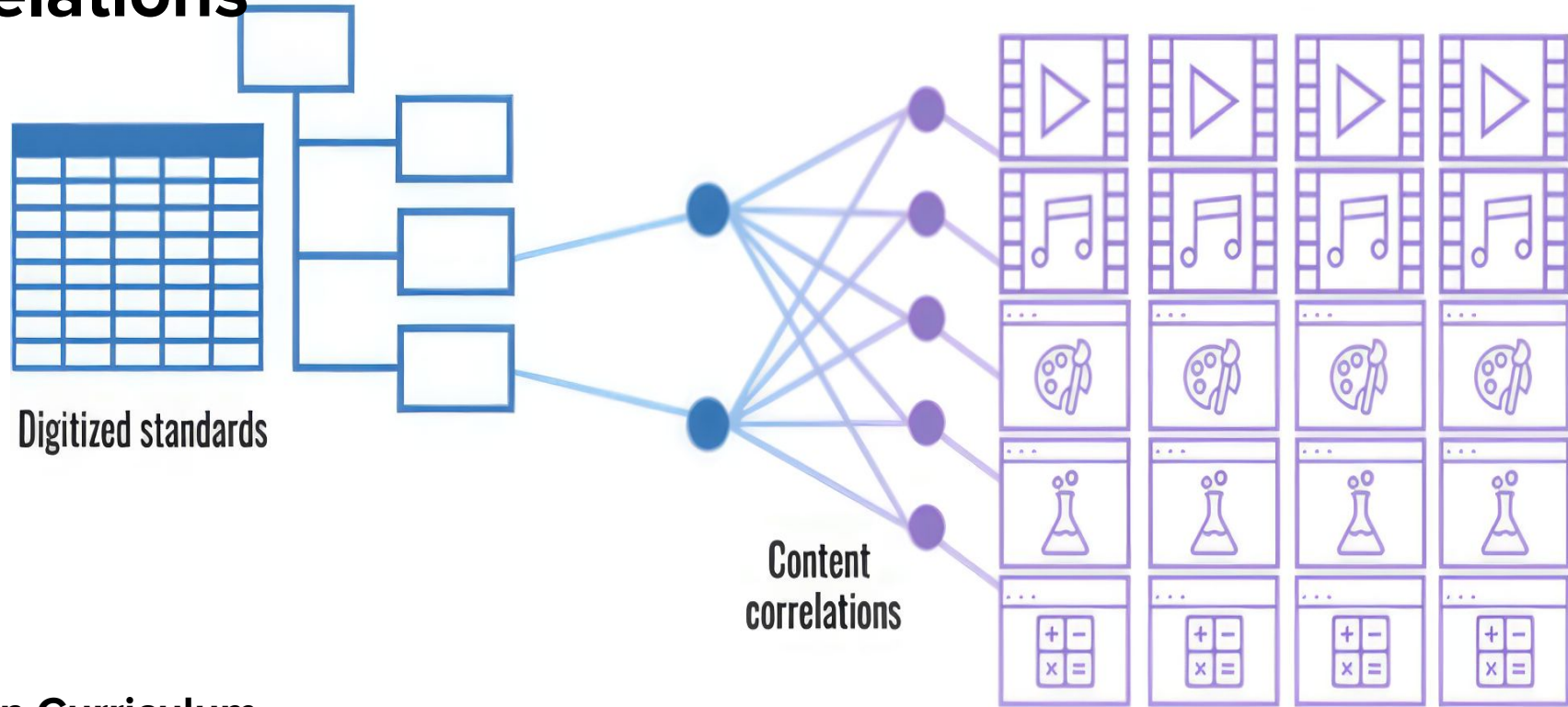*https://rocdata.global/pages/background/*

AI automation for organizing digital learning resources for refugees

CHALLENGE: Alignment of digital content is time and labour intensive, and creation of new curricula makes this a moving target.

SOLUTION: Develop multiple machine learning algorithms to automate key parts of the alignment process by making content recommendations for specific topics and learning objectives based on the curricular context

LEARNING EQUALITY

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SCHMIDT FUTURES

THE LEARNING AGENCY LAB

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Focus of current automation work: predicting correlations

Digitized standards

Content correlations

Open Educational Resources

Kenyan Curriculum
   >> Form 1
      >> Mathematics
         >> Unit 20
            >> Angles and Plane Figures

Geometric constructions: perpendicular line

Volume of Cylinders
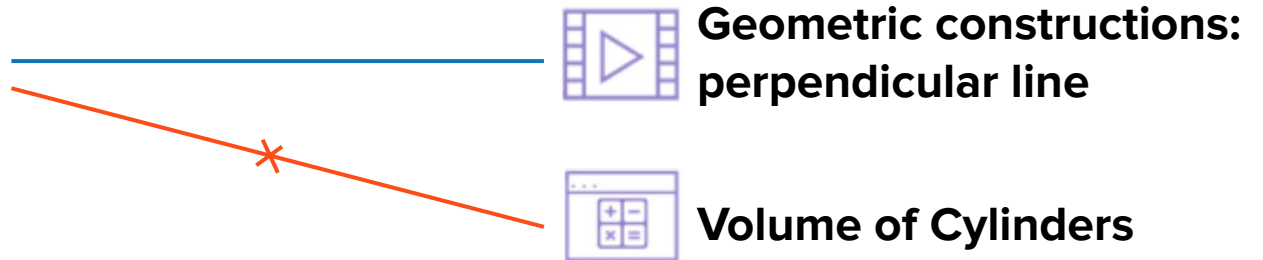
If we built such a tool(s), it would support:

- **Governments** to quickly evaluate whether digital resources created for another system/country could be used in their schools

- **Educators** to access diverse digital content, providing great autonomy and easier access to categorized resources that map to the level and learning objectives of their classes

- **Content designers** to distribute their digital resources to global audiences

- **Schools to refugees or new learners** into their system, evaluating learning equivalence and identify materials to assist in bridging gaps

- **Students** to receive differentiated learning pathways for personal development

- **Parents** to access a free, open digital resources for their children's revision at home

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Accomplishments

- 1,057 teams (1,306 individuals) across 68+ countries participated in the Kaggle

  - 4 winners - Leaderboard (ranked by accuracy scores on the hidden testing dataset)

  - 3 winners - Efficiency (also considers runtime in addition to predictive performance)

- Resulted in some promising algorithms that are elegant, require limited computational resources, and perform well at the task

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Reflections

- Ability to be nimble and flexible

- Open dialogue and sharing of experiences

- Thought partnership

- Engage respective networks

- Potential for ecosystem change

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What's next

- Prototyping the tool with winning algorithms, and testing with curriculum designers.

- Explorations of GPT-4 to support extraction of curricular taxonomies from curriculum documents or other sources, for "end to end automation"

- Identifying resources for future development.