

UNICEF OFFICE OF INNOVATION

# MFA SWEDEN AND UNICEF OFFICE OF INNOVATION

A catalytic partnership unlocking  
global impact

## HEADLINE IMPACT

The UNICEF Office of Innovation (OOI) is working to shape a world where every child, everywhere, thrives. Sweden's catalytic investment in OOI helps unlock local solutions with the potential to make global impact. It amplifies Swedish values of innovation, gender equality, and partnership-driven impact and reinforces innovation as a core driving force for accelerated progress within UNICEF and through our work to improve outcomes for every child everywhere in this and coming generations. This reflects Sweden's global leadership for sustained social impact and economic development through innovation.

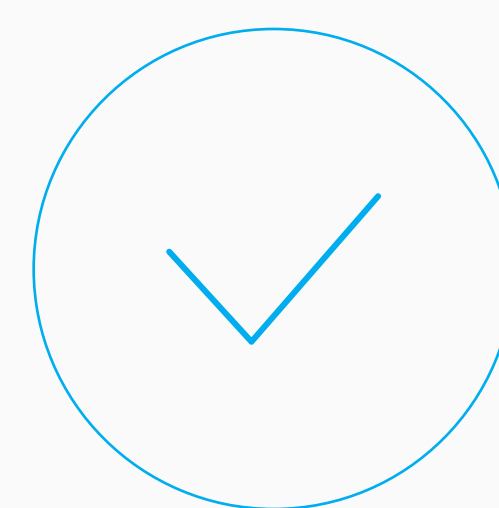
Today, strategic alliances between governments, the private sector, and UNICEF are essential to solving the world's most pressing challenges. From Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital tools to nature-based solutions, frontier technologies are transforming education, health, climate adaptation, and water security. Support from Sweden has helped equip local entrepreneurs and championed women-led innovation, driving inclusive economic growth and health equity in emerging economies.

Since 2014, UNICEF's innovation efforts have piloted and scaled over **200 solutions** in **136 countries**, reaching **38 million people directly** and **181 million indirectly**. Since 2021, with the adoption of a new business architecture made possible by Sweden, OOI has scaled **46 solutions** in 90 countries and unlocked over **USD \$40 million in additional financing**.

Now more than ever, the world needs problem solvers and bold partners to unlock and scale transformative solutions that deliver real impact for children and communities.

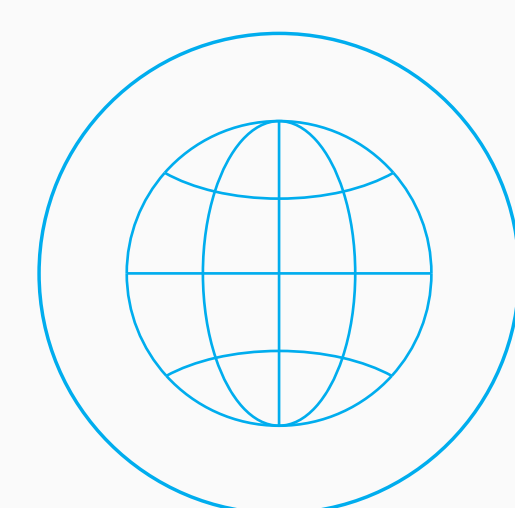
46

solutions



90

countries



40M

Unlocked in additional financing





DELIVERING GROUND-LEVEL IMPACT AT SCALE

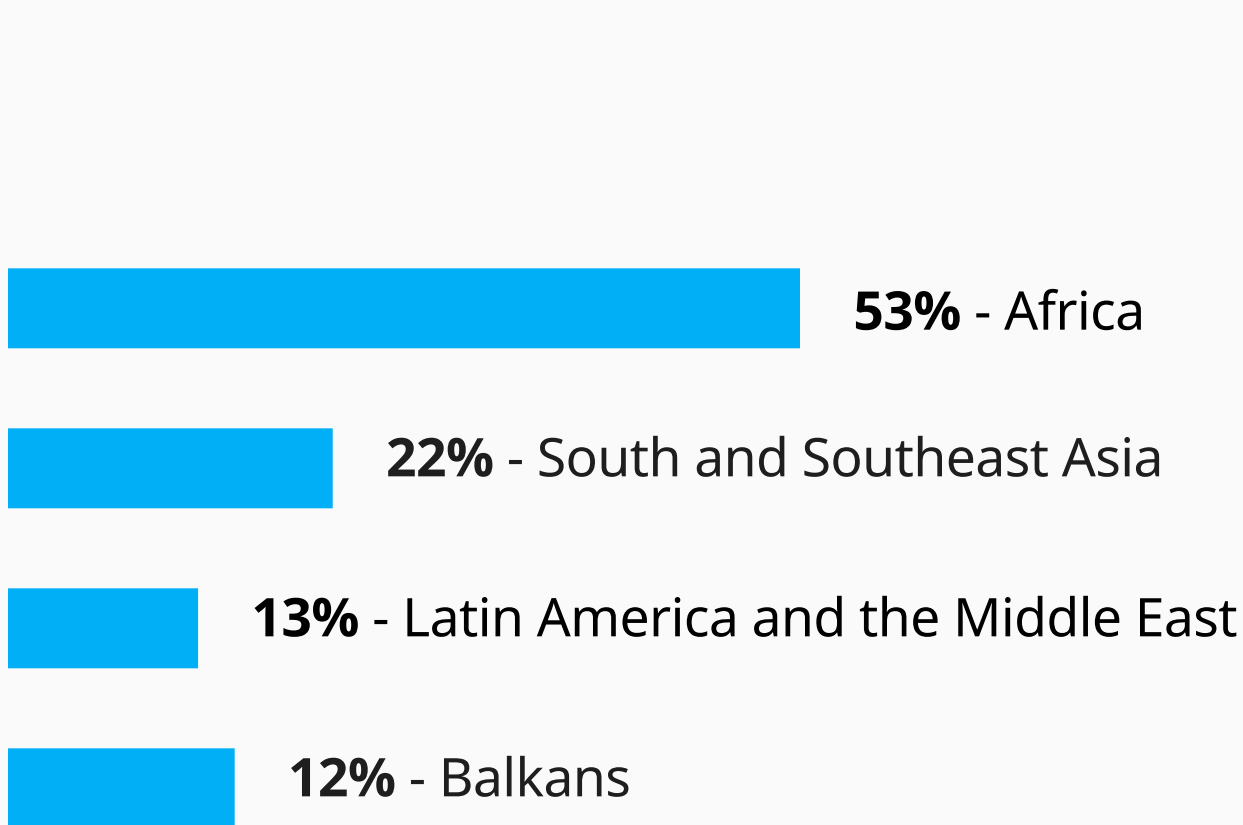
OOI is scaling demand-driven solutions that respond to the needs of children and their communities worldwide, directly reflecting Sweden’s priorities of driving inclusive economic growth, creating independence, and empowering women and girls.

Illustrative of this is the recently launched five-year fem tech initiative, a direct outcome of market-shaping analysis conducted alongside Sweden’s strong impact investor ecosystem, notably with Case For Her. The initiative kicked off with a call for applications from frontier tech startups in low- and middle-income economies to develop open-source solutions that improve the health, well-being and socio- economic participation of girls and women. The call received over 1,100 applications globally – 53 per cent from Africa, 22 per cent from South and Southeast Asia, 12 per cent from the Balkans, and 13 per cent from Latin America and the Middle East. In total, 89 per cent of applications came from women-led or co-founded start-ups, altogether delivering the strongest ever response to a call for application in the Fund’s decade long history.

OOI’s global convening and influencing power is further strengthened by Sweden’s catalytic investments, which have supported a shared commitment to digital inclusivity and economic opportunity for all. From shaping the Global Digital Compact to co-founding the Digital Public Goods Alliance, this collaborative approach has advanced open-source solutions as essential drivers for an inclusive digital future.

With Sweden’s support, OOI has been able to build on strong foundations, partnering with the UN Tech Envoy’s Office and leveraging Sweden and Zambia’s leadership to shape the Compact’s implementation. In 2024, this work secured strong recognition of digital public goods (DPGs) and open-source solutions, laying the groundwork for sustainable DPG ecosystems that foster locally-driven digital transformation.

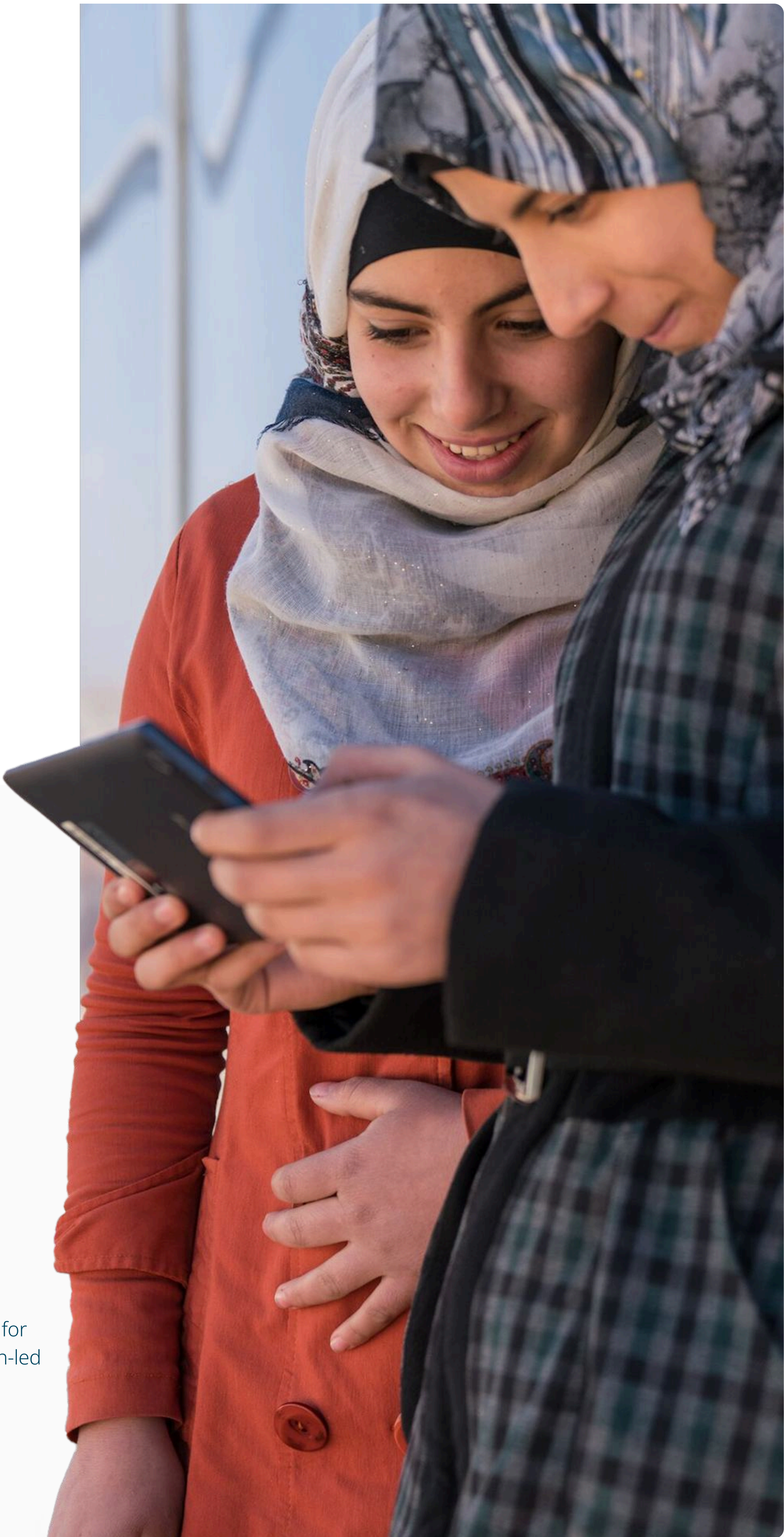
Through these efforts, OOI has partnered with country offices to strengthen national and regional capacities, building ecosystems that can develop and scale homegrown solutions. From the initial pathfinding phase (2019–2022), mapping and testing DPG prospects in over 10 countries, to the more focused engagement with six countries (2022–2024), OOI has demonstrated how open-source solutions and local capacity-building are key to long-term impact. In Brazil, Ghana, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Lebanon and Sierra Leone, integrating DPGs and open-source into digital entrepreneurship curricula and supporting local tech startups has helped unlock new opportunities for children and communities.



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ADAPT TO SCALE...

Ongoing support from Sweden will enable OOI to identify, adapt and scale demand driven, problem-focused and possibilities-driven solutions. For instance, OOI is leading on the adaptation of solutions that bridge linguistic and cultural divides.

- In Burkina Faso, AI-powered text-to-speech and translation tools in the U-Youth app are connecting 700,000 U-Reporters to vital content in Mooré, spoken by half the population, with national rollouts planned to double participation.
- In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, open machine learning models, including Meta’s No Language Left Behind, have translated humanitarian training materials into Congolese Swahili for over 20 implementing partners, ensuring faster, secure and inclusive access to critical information.

With sustained funding, these pilots can be scaled to more countries, expanding equitable access to essential tools and knowledge.

MULTI-COUNTRY SCALE


Scaling innovation also means aligning solutions with the realities of young people’s lives.

- **The Game Changers Coalition (GCC)** demonstrates this by harnessing the video gaming industry to equip adolescent girls with skills in coding, design and storytelling. By the end of 2024, the initiative had trained **154,000 girls**, parents and teachers across seven countries, resulting in over **3,000 girls-developed video games** addressing mental health, gender equality and cultural identity. Two pilot countries, Cambodia and Brazil, have integrated the curriculum into national education policies. Foundational support from Sweden for the Game Changers Coalition unlocked follow-on partnerships with the video game and tech sector welcoming the Global Video Game Coalition (GVGC), Micron Foundation and Bitget all galvanized to reach **1.1 million girls by 2027**, embedding innovation in formal education systems for long-term impact.

Progress with the GCC reflects OOI’s ability to diversify funding sources and deliver innovative impact for children and young people. Support from Micron Foundation has expanded the initiative to an eighth country, Malaysia, while a partnership with Bitget will develop UNICEF’s first online and in-person interactive training module on blockchain, drawing on video game production skills for teachers and students.

- In 2024, UNICEF’s UTEST initiative expanded a youth-centred model for HIV prevention across West and Central Africa, reaching over **4.4 million young people** (aged 15–24) with self-care tools like HIV self-testing and oral PrEP. The initiative blends conventional and digital delivery, leveraging social media, geo-mapping and AI to create discreet, accessible entry points to care. UTEST’s ecosystem model - coordinating public health services, private pharmacies and youth navigators - has connected over **340,000 adolescents** to vital information and referred more than **1,600** to care.

Sweden’s catalytic funding is essential to UNICEF’s approach to scale, moving beyond pilots to reshape systems and deliver lasting impact. By investing in smart, proven solutions and driving strategic scaling pathways, Sweden and UNICEF are ensuring that local innovators, communities and children are not just beneficiaries but leaders of change.

154K 

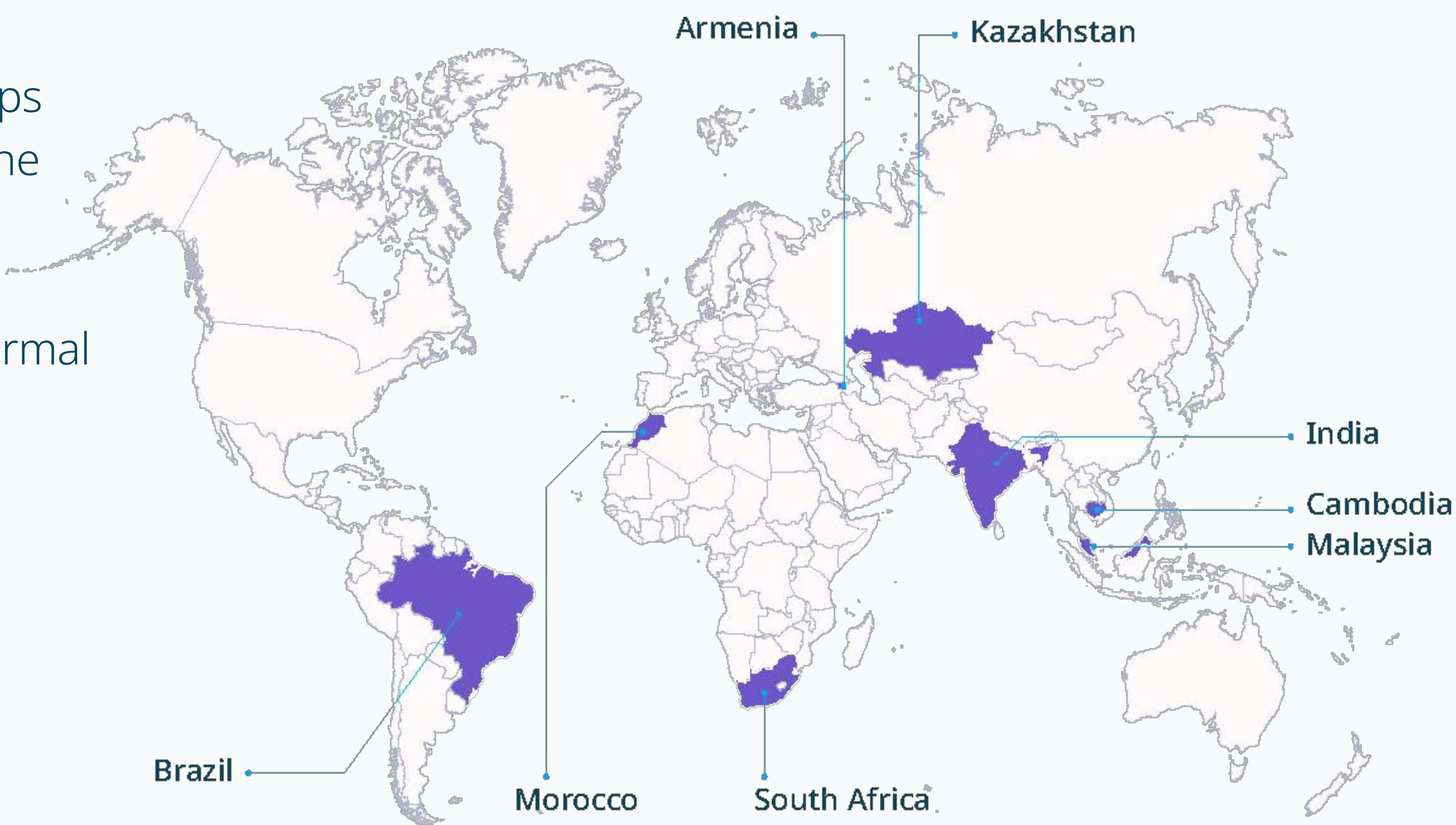
girls, parents and teachers trained across seven countries,

3K 

video games developed

1.1M 

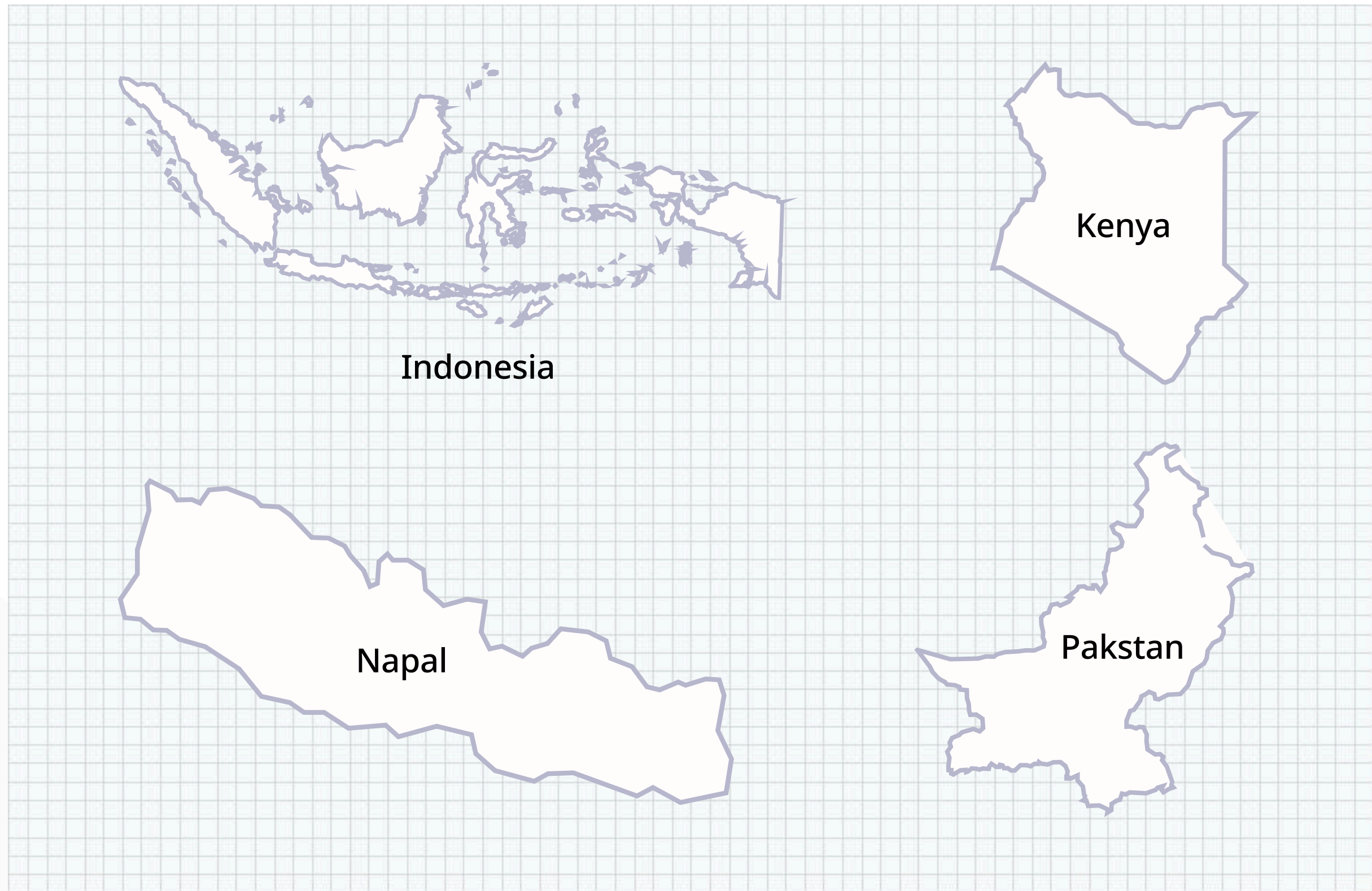
girls to be reached by 2027



Game Changers Coalition pilot countries



**Scaling Climate Solutions:** Through Sweden's transformative support for initiatives like Innovation30, young innovators like Noemi Florea can scale their innovative solutions across UNICEF's global networks. Noemi's affordable water purification system, Cycleau, costing under \$500 per unit, transforms wastewater into safe drinking water for schools and communities. In 2025, the UNICEF Tajikistan Country purchased 10 units, bringing demand-driven solutions to scale and delivering real impact for children and families.



**Blockchain for Humanitarian Impact:** UNICEF's Venture Fund investee, Rumsan, a female-founded company, scaled Rahat, an open-source digital public good that strengthens humanitarian cash assistance for unbanked communities. Rahat's has scaled from Nepal to Indonesia, Kenya, and Pakistan. Backed by UNICEF's global network and mentorship, Rahat is now being explored by governments and humanitarian actors for anticipatory cash assistance—demonstrating how Sweden's investment is helping local innovators scale solutions and enable socio economic participation for the marginalised.

**Architects of the Future:** By 2024, Sweden's investment in UNICEF's innovation network helped expand UPSHIFT to 56 countries, equipping 5.2 million young people with the skills and confidence to address challenges affecting their communities—totalling 145 million learning hours.

145M  56   
learning hours countries

5.2M   
young people equipped with the skills and confidence to address challenges affecting their communities



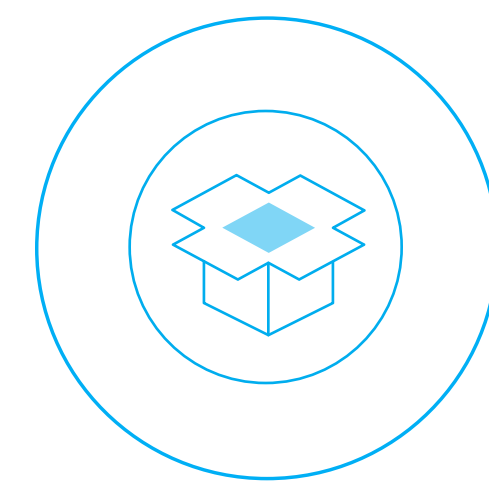
## LEVERAGING NORDIC PRIVATE SECTOR SUPPORT

Sweden's leadership has catalyzed diverse Nordic partnerships and unique private sector engagement, amplifying innovation and collective impact for children. By unlocking frontier technologies and empowering local entrepreneurs, especially women-led solutions, Sweden is setting a standard for innovation that transcends borders. These alliances are moving beyond pilots to scale what works, driving real impact across health, climate, education and water.

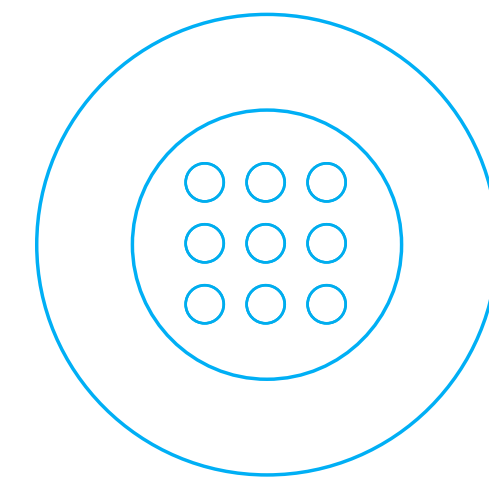
Sweden's investment is supporting innovative partnerships and new business models that are strengthening the Nordics' collective leadership in global innovation for children. This includes donor-hosted and funded offices, which bring together governments, the private sector and local entrepreneurs to co-create and scale transformative solutions.



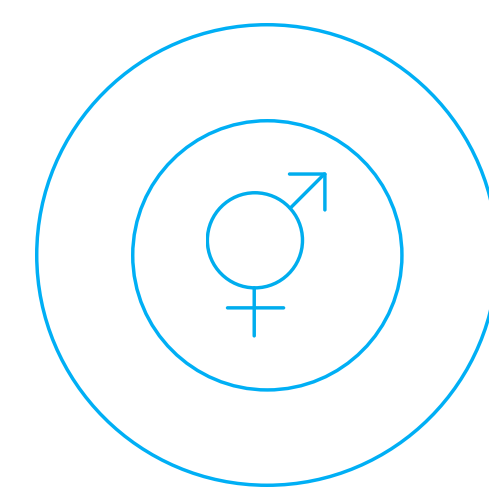
## Across the Nordics, governments are playing a central role:



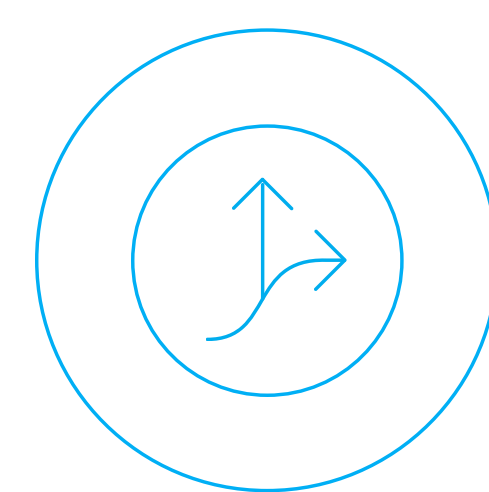
**Innovation Norway's** backing of Kits that Fit and Project Alpha,



**NORAD's investment** in digital public goods,



**Sida's support** for the Venture Fund's fem tech initiative,



**Denmark and Finland's MFA-led** WASH and Learning Innovation Hubs.

Alongside these public investments, the private sector is also stepping up to unlock new possibilities. From Arm's AI-powered air quality sensors in Laos to OpenAI's work on accessible digital learning, and Takeda's investment in frontier tech for health, these collaborations are driving change where it matters most. Game Changers Coalition is equipping girls with digital skills through partnerships with video gaming and tech companies, and we've aligned with Sweden's private sector expertise for instance with Case for Her advancing gender equity and Ericsson on addressing the learning crisis through digital tools. The Ethereum Foundation has been a long-standing partner in building and strengthening an ecosystem of innovators working on blockchain technology via the UNICEF Venture Fund's crypto currency capabilities and Fjälräven's engagement underscores the power of Nordic companies to deliver real social impact.

Together, these partnerships show how Sweden's initial investment is catalyzing a global movement, that delivers results for children and communities, stimulates the growth of locally driven solutions and accelerates impact of global innovation.



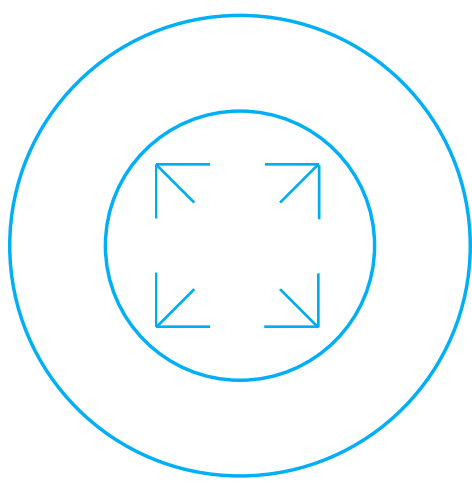
OOI VALUE ADD: INCUBATING AND ACCELERATING GAME CHANGING SOLUTIONS IN THE HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

At a time of limited ODA funding, compounding and protracted humanitarian crises fuelled by geopolitical tensions and environmental disasters that disproportionately affect children, impactful, scalable solutions are urgently needed to reverse the trend of devastation and drive global social impact. OOI was established to identify, adapt and scale the most promising solutions to accelerate progress for children. To deliver on this mandate, OOI relies on the steadfast support of like-minded partners, and Sweden has proven to be one, enabling us to fulfil our mission. Our approach is driving real impact across UNICEF's global operations, with a clear focus on gender equality, climate action and inclusive growth. Sweden's support enables UNICEF to mainstream innovative approaches through initiatives like Giga, the Learning Innovation Hub, the Sustainable WASH Innovation Hub and the Innovative Finance Hub, all incubated in OOI.

To date, Giga has provided products and services in **34 countries** and territories. The number of schools with access to connectivity among these countries rising from 14.5k to 24k, benefiting **11 million students**. Overall, Giga has mapped 2.13 million schools across 142 countries. The Learning Innovation Hub's Digital Education Strategy aims to reach **4 million teachers** and **120 million students** in **40 countries by 2026**, with government-backed pilots in Bhutan already transforming national education systems. Since its operationalization in Denmark, the Hub has led on large scale transformational initiatives with the potential to impact over **100 million people across Africa**. These are already positioned for scale and are set to be realized in the latter part of 2025 and 2026.

Beyond these flagship initiatives, UNICEF is embedding innovation as a discipline to ensure that country-level solutions are rigorously tested and scaled. The 5D Innovation Framework guides the identification, validation and scaling of high-impact solutions. Initiatives like COMPASS and SPARK further embed innovation in national strategies and organizational culture. In 2024 alone, COMPASS supported **10 country offices** to develop governance models and roadmaps that could impact up to **200 million children**, while SPARK's second phase, also backed by philanthropic funding, is reinforcing a culture of proactive problem-solving across the organization and beyond. This comprehensive approach demonstrates how Sweden's investment is building UNICEF's long-term capacity to deliver measurable change, ensuring that innovation can reach every child and community worldwide.

Innovating through crisis, Kits that Fit:



Scaled to 9 countries



1 million people reached

Since its initial investment, the Kits that Fit initiative has scaled to **nine countries** and reached **1 million people**. This approach puts people at the centre of humanitarian response, tailoring support to community needs and strengthening local economies through local sourcing. Recognized globally with the 2024 Gold Anthem Award for social innovation, Kits that Fit is now shaping UNICEF's broader emergency response strategies, demonstrating what it means to scale responsibly and deliver dignified, people-first aid.

Giga:

34 

countries provided connectivity products and services

11M 

students benefited

2.1M 

schools mapped across 142 countries

The Learning Innovation Hub:

120M 

students aimed to be reached


4M 

teachers aimed to be reached

Kits that Fit:

1M 

people reached

9 

countries scaled to





## Sparkling Local Innovation:



**Eight** innovation teams – collaborations between UNICEF and country level private sector collaborators

Sparkling Local Innovation: SPARK 2.0 and COMPASS are bringing critical resources and expertise to UNICEF country offices and local partners – governments, startups, and communities alike. The second Spark Accelerator Week held in April 2025 illustrates this impact: **eight** innovation teams – collaborations between UNICEF and country level private sector collaborators - from Bolivia, Ethiopia, Iran, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mozambique and Pakistan convened to scale locally designed solutions in solar energy, AI for early childhood learning and climate resilience, and digital tools for health workers and immunization. These partnerships and investments are unlocking the potential of local solutions to deliver transformative, lasting impact for children and families.

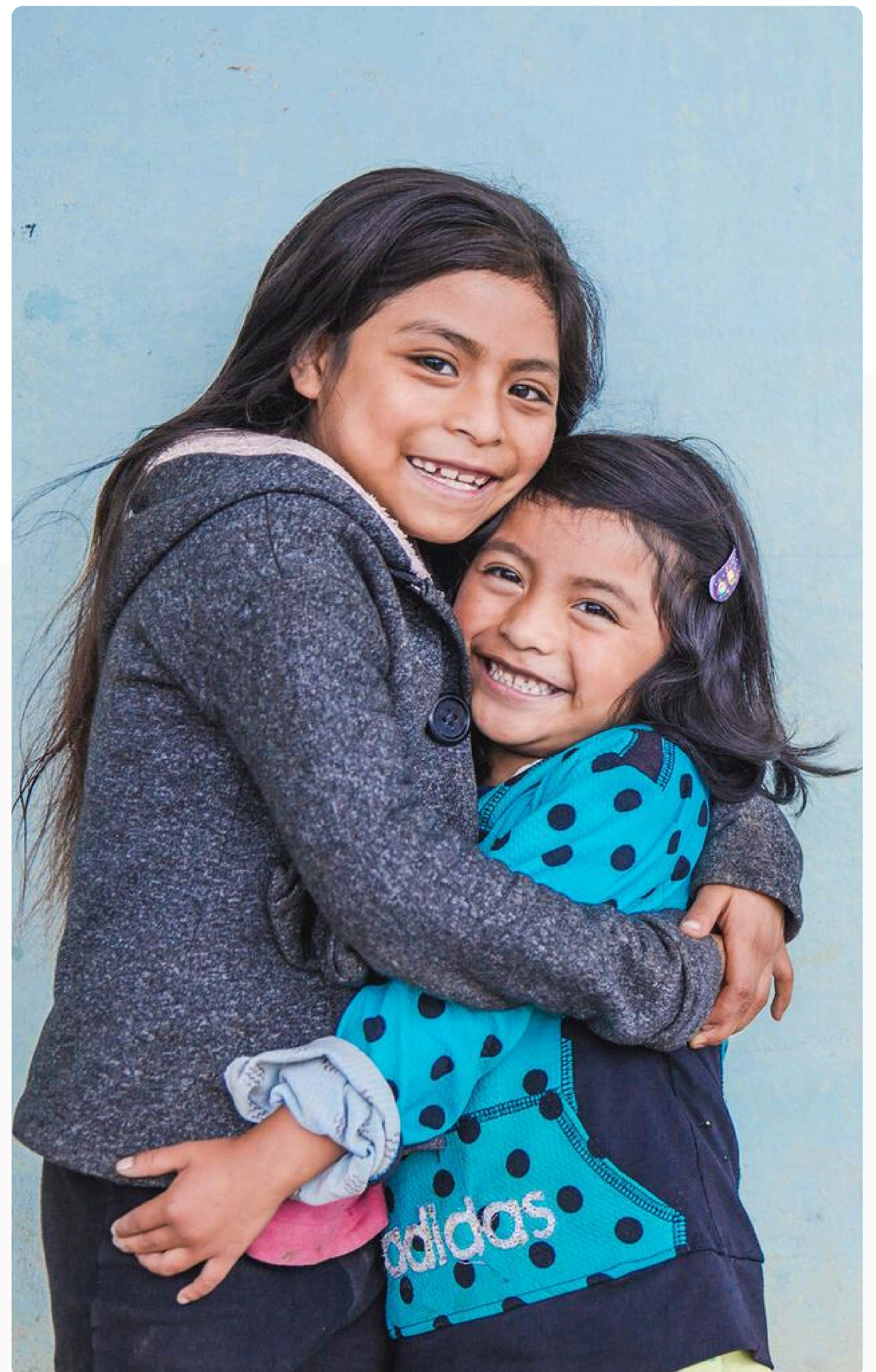
## CALL TO ACTION & NEXT STEPS

Together, UNICEF and Sweden are opening new possibilities for this and coming generations by identifying, adapting and scaling impactful solutions for children and communities.

Sweden's investment in UNICEF's Office of Innovation is already delivering measurable results across climate action, gender equality, humanitarian response, health and digital inclusion. This partnership reflects Sweden's global leadership in harnessing innovation as a key to unlocking value-driven private sector investment as strategic approach to global development. OOI is delivering this vision by driving possibility-led, problem-focused solutions that are transforming lives in this and coming generations. But sustaining and expanding this investment is essential. Sweden's continued support will ensure that its leadership in gender equality, inclusive growth and climate resilience delivers real systems change that position children, young people and communities as active participants in shaping a more just and inclusive world.

This is what it means to invest in solutions that work. Sweden's catalytic funding is unlocking UNICEF's ability to partner with local innovators, the private sector and Nordic partners to reshape the systems that serve children and communities.

Now is the time to build on this momentum, ensuring that the promise of innovation reaches every child, everywhere.





## 2025 Scenario:

UNICEF OFFICE OF INNOVATION