The World’s First National SDG Innovation Lab

November 2017

Yerevan, Armenia
In September 2015, the global community adopted a new development framework for the next 15 years – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, or the SDGs.

The SDGs are more ambitious than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

SDGs are a global "to do list" for addressing social, economic and environmental challenges facing the humanity. Each country is expected to adapt the SDGs to its national context by setting concrete targets and indicators for 2030.

SDG challenges are complex and interconnected. They cannot be solved by the governments alone and require the engagement of the private sector, civil society, and other actors. They require new approaches, new methodologies and possibly new types of institutions.

Armenia was among the 193 UN Member states to adopt the 17 SDGs, which are currently in the process of nationalization and localization. SDGs are a crucial benchmark for the Government's Reform Agenda.
A space for experimentation, collaboration, analytics and world-class human resource development, the lab will unlock Armenia’s development potential and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
Lab Principles

The Four P’s

Progressive
Bridges the gap between rapid, short-term wins with deep long-term vision

Participatory
Utilizes “open source” SDG know-ware across sectors, organisations and countries

Private Sector
Creates a market for development, as SDGs reflect genuine needs, and every need is a market in disguise

Pragmatic
Helps reduce cost of governance (e.g. through behaviour design and big data)
The Lab will support the NDS by: (i) focusing an SDG lens to Armenia’s development challenges, and (ii) identifying innovative, cross-cutting solutions.
Current status

The next six months is the Lab’s Start-up Phase. This will involve:

- Lab Set-up
- Recruitment of Core Staff
- Networking
- Resource Mobilisation
- Two Experiments
- One Data Pilot
- SDG Barometer Pilot
- Capacity Building

This is balanced with a three-year vision that delivers in four key areas:

- The development of cadre of talented citizens in the education system, the private sector and, crucially, government
- Behavioural experimentation and evidence-based policy-making
- Public-private partnerships through impact investment mechanisms
- Impact measurement through use of new, big and citizen-generated data
Service Lines

National SDG Innovation Lab

- Behavioural Experimentation
- Data Analytics
- Impact Investment
- Capacity Building
Behavioural Experimentation

This methodology is based on the growing idea that psychological, social, cognitive, and emotional factors can drive individual decisions.

Through small, subtle changes – or nudges – human behaviour can be changed in huge ways: from encouraging entrepreneurship to reducing water consumption to reporting human rights violations. This is critical to applying genuine evidence-based policy-making.
Can we close the gap between required labour force and educational output through behavioural experimentation?

**Control group 1**

**Input:** information on:
- job market trends,
- popular professions,
- average salaries,
- probability of finding a job,
- excess of “elite” professions.

**Control group 2**

**Input:** no information

**Outcome/behaviour change:** change in courses and universities applied for between groups 1 & 2.

**Impact:** higher % of youth study subjects required for current and future labour market (IT, vocational subjects, etc.)
 Behavioural Experimentation

- How to enhance the performance of Armenian students at middle and high schools?
- Can we increase teacher’s motivation levels?
- Can we enhance the quality of education by triggering competition among schools?
- Can we enhance child’s academic progress by making parents more responsible for their children?

- Can tax evasion be reduced by providing additional public expenditure information to taxpayers?
- Can tax evasion be reduced by engaging taxpayers in public spending decisions?

- Can we increase the efficiency of water consumption by sharing information about reduced consumption by neighbours?

- Can we accelerate the installation of rooftop solar panels?

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A wealth of new information is at our disposal: **online searches, digital transactions, mobile phone and social media usage, utility consumption, satellite imagery, citizen-generated data and more.** The Lab will partner with UN’s primary data agency, UN Global Pulse, to access cutting-edge technologies and analysis techniques.
Data Analytics

1. Designing public services through social media analysis

   The lab will map citizens’ sentiments and responses to different public services - gathering insights directly from users and using them to design more demand-driven services.

2. Mobile data for tourism statistics

   Armenia has a growing tourism industry, but lacks high quality data to monitor the impact of new interventions. The lab will use data produced by mobile phones to create a new, real-time monitoring platform.

3. GIS and other Satellite imagery to track land degradation

   Cutting-edge open source data will be combined with specially-developed machine-learning tools to map agricultural areas at risk from increased land degradation.

4. Rapid response to extreme weather conditions

   Citizen-generated data will be utilised to enable immediate response to devastating hail storms and other extreme weather events.
A user-friendly data visualization tool will be designed to monitor the SDGs’ real-time progress, inform policy and decision-making, and measure impact.
Impact Investment

Testing and prototyping **impact investment financial mechanisms** using ODA and government funds along with private capital to address SDGs.

These mechanisms will:

- target innovative change in how the Government works and new formats of public-private partnership (e.g. social, development impact bonds)
- leverage public funding for results (outcomes) thus stimulating competition and finding solutions with the biggest policy/development impact and not the lowest price.

Example: Social Impact Bonds

© Harvard Magazine
The Lab will rely on a network of individuals driving change and SDG implementation in their respective spheres. These SDG Champions will be trained in the Lab’s most advanced public policy tools and will be leading advocates of the Agenda 2030.

**AGBU Armenia** network of over 15,000 professionals from different fields are ready to invest their knowledge and expertise in Armenia’s development.

**Yes Armenia programme** participants will serve as on the ground SDG advocates in their respective ministries, and the Lab will offer a platform for them to come together for cross-sectoral collaboration.
Capacity building

On behavioural experimentation

Partnership with the world’s premier behavioural science institution: the UK-based BIT.

Ultimate goal: each line ministry will have a dedicated behavioural science team, responsible for generating evidence-driven policy recommendations.

Two exercises planned:

1. Interactive training programme: 3-day training carried out by BIT to understand behavioural barriers and identify “quick win” intervention points.

2. Pilot study: 36-day study based on a to-be-decided critical behavioural issue, implemented in partnership with BIT.
Capacity building

- Ensuring that policies and public services are designed not just for citizens but with citizens.
- With Hans Sauer Foundation

- Training in-house specialists to improve data quality, analysis and visualisation capacities.
  - With UN Global Pulse

- Supporting policymakers and SDG champions to identify cross-cutting solutions to complex socio-economic, environmental and governmental challenges
  - With Stanford Change Labs

- Data analysis
- Human-centered design
- Systems thinking

Capacity building

ChangeLabs.
Potential partners
The Lab plans to work with organisations worldwide to bring in global knowledge and expertise to Armenia.
# The Team

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Recruited/To be recruited</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDG Lab Lead</td>
<td>Recruited</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDG Innovation Specialist</td>
<td>To be recruited</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research and Communications Expert</td>
<td>To be recruited</td>
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<td>Statistician</td>
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<td>Data Analyst</td>
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<td>Data Visualizer</td>
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<td>Consultant on SIBs</td>
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<td>Citizen Engagement Specialist</td>
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Budget for 3 years

- Reducing resource consumption
- Increasing educational achievement
- Reducing tax evasion
- Increasing green practices
- Social Impact Bond specialists
- Social Impact Bonds in different sectors
- Data analyst
- Data programmer
- Data visualization Specialist
- SDG Barometer
- Behavioural science training for Ministries
- New data for National Statistics
- Systems Thinking training
- Operations and Outreach $250,000
Join us in building the first ever National SDG Innovation Lab, to help find solutions for complex issues and leapfrog to a new frontier of development practice.

How can you contribute?

1. Become a key partner

2. Contribute to specific activities

3. Provide in-kind support (experts/study tours/training/peer review)