

INNOVATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOMALI CONTEXT



Introduction

Module Purpose

- This module strengthens the capacity of Local Humanitarian Partners (LHPs) in Somalia to apply practical, inclusive, and low-cost innovation approaches to community development and humanitarian programming, particularly in resource-constrained, fragile, and conflict-affected environments.

Overall Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this module, participants will be able to:
- Explain innovation in simple and practical terms within the Somali humanitarian context
- Identify adaptable local innovative practices already used by communities and LHPs
- Apply problem-solving and design thinking tools in resource-constrained settings
- Promote inclusive and gender-responsive social innovation
- Support youth-led innovation initiatives, including climate and community solutions
- Design, test, and scale innovative solutions responsibly
- Monitor and evaluate innovation outcomes and learning

Unit 1: Understanding Innovation in the Somali Context



Key Concepts and Definitions

Innovation (Simple Definition)

- Innovation means finding better ways to solve problems. These better ways may involve:
- Improving existing practices
- Adapting traditional solutions to new challenges
- Combining old knowledge with new ideas
- Innovation focuses on impact and improvement, not on novelty alone



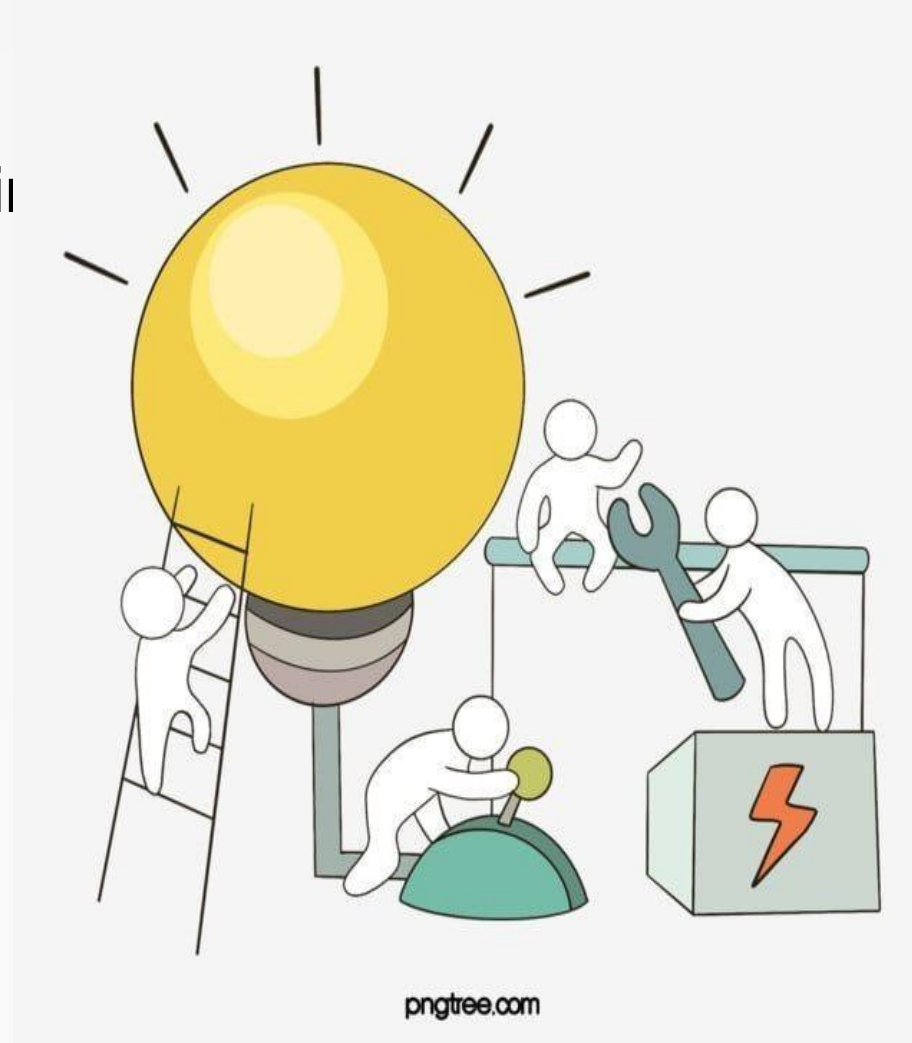
Local Innovation

- **Local innovation** refers to solutions developed by communities themselves, based on:
 - Indigenous knowledge
 - Cultural practices
 - Local resources
 - Lived experience of risk and resilience
- **Examples in Somalia include:**
 - Clan-based conflict mediation mechanisms
 - Informal savings and credit groups (Ayuto / Hagbad)
 - Communal water-sharing agreements during drought

- **Local early warning indicators** (livestock health, pasture condition, wind patterns) triggering early action
- Local innovation is often:
 - Low-cost
 - Contextually appropriate
 - More sustainable than externally introduced solutions
- **Key Message:** Communities are not just beneficiaries, they are innovators

Humanitarian Innovation

- Humanitarian innovation involves new or improved ways to prevent, respond to, or recover from humanitarian crises, while upholding humanitarian principles.
- This can include:
 - New program designs
 - Improved service delivery models
 - Better coordination or feedback mechanisms
- Humanitarian innovation should:
 - Address real needs
 - Reduce harm and risk
 - Improve accountability to affected populations



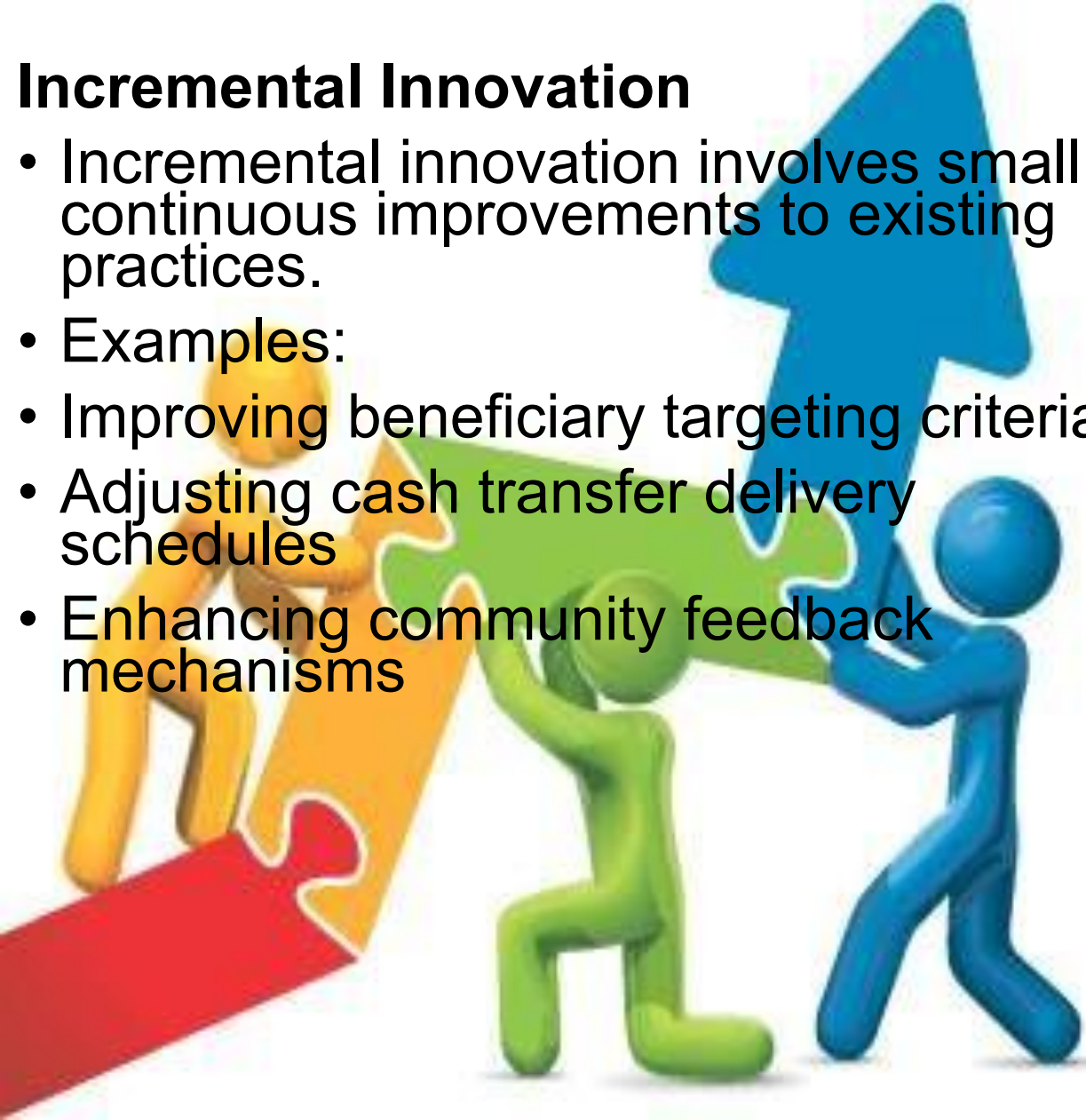
Incremental vs. Transformative Innovation

Incremental Innovation

- Incremental innovation involves small, continuous improvements to existing practices.
- Examples:
- Improving beneficiary targeting criteria
- Adjusting cash transfer delivery schedules
- Enhancing community feedback mechanisms

Transformative Innovation

- Transformative innovation leads to fundamental change in systems or approaches. That upholds dignity, choice and protects human rights.
- Examples:
- AI-powered disaster prediction systems guiding pre-crisis funding release
- Digitally integrated multi-sector case management platforms
- Mobile-based livestock insurance linked to climate triggers



Somalia Context Narrative: Innovation from Necessity

- Somali communities have a long history of innovation driven by:
- Chronic scarcity
- Recurrent droughts and floods
- Insecurity and displacement
- Weak formal institutions
- Rather than waiting for external solutions, communities have adapted creatively.



Group work Exercise: Innovation Reflection

Exercise Objective

- To help participants recognize and value innovations already present in their communities.

Instructions

- Divide participants into small groups (4–6 people)
- Ask each group to discuss:
 - What problems do communities face regularly?
 - What local solutions are already being used?
- Each group lists at least 3 local innovations
- Groups share their findings in plenary



Integrating Innovation into Humanitarian Work

Innovation in humanitarian settings must align with core humanitarian principles.

Humanity

- Innovation should:
- Reduce suffering
- Protect dignity
- Prioritize the most vulnerable

Neutrality

- Innovative approaches must not:
- Favor one group over another
- Be perceived as taking sides in conflict

Impartiality

- Innovation must be based on:
- Needs, not clan, gender, or political affiliation
- Transparent and fair criteria

Independence

- Innovative solutions should:
- Avoid political or military influence
- Maintain operational autonomy

The background of the slide is a dense, overlapping pattern of yellow diamond-shaped signs with a dark blue border. Each sign contains the words "SAFETY" and "FIRST" in a bold, sans-serif font, arranged in two lines. The signs are slightly offset from each other, creating a sense of depth and repetition.

Do No Harm and Inclusion Considerations

- Innovation should not:
- Increase protection risks
- Exclude women, minorities, or persons with disabilities
- Deepen clan or power imbalances
- Before adopting an innovation, ask:
- Who benefits?
- Who might be excluded?
- What unintended risks could arise?

Key Principle: Innovation must be safe, inclusive, and conflict-sensitive

UNIT SUMMARY

Key Takeaways

- Innovation is about better problem-solving, not technology alone
- Somali communities are rich sources of innovation
- Both incremental and transformative innovations matter
- Humanitarian principles must guide all innovation efforts
- Local NGOs play a critical role in identifying, adapting, and scaling responsible innovations

Reflection Question

- What is one local innovation you see differently now and how could your organization support it more effectively?

Unit 2: Local Innovative Practices in Somali Humanitarian Programming



Introduction

Somali humanitarian response has increasingly demonstrated that local humanitarian partners (LHPs) and communities are not only implementers, but innovators. In a context of recurring shocks, limited resources, and access constraints, Somali actors have developed practical, adaptive, and culturally grounded solutions that often outperform externally designed interventions.

Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Identify existing innovative practices used by LHPs and communities
- Explain why local solutions are often more sustainable than externally driven approaches
- Analyze who leads, who benefits, and who may be excluded from local innovations
- Recognize common gaps in how local innovations are documented, learned from, and scaled

Understanding Local Innovation in Practice

- Local innovative practices are often:
- Context-specific: shaped by culture, clan systems, and livelihoods
- Low-cost and adaptive: using available resources
- Socially embedded: rooted in trust, relationships, and reciprocity
- Unlike externally introduced models, local innovations tend to align closely with:
- Community priorities
- Social norms and power structures
- Long-term sustainability beyond project cycles

- **Local vs External Innovation Pathways**



Understanding Local Innovation in Practice

• 1 Mobile Money for Cash Assistance

- Somalia is globally recognized for its advanced mobile money ecosystem, which emerged from necessity rather than formal banking systems.
- **Innovative aspects include:**
- Rapid and secure cash transfers
- Reduced protection risks associated with physical cash
- Improved transparency and accountability
- For humanitarian actors, mobile money has:
- Transformed cash-based assistance delivery
- Enabled remote programming in insecure areas
- Supported dignity and choice for affected populations

• 2 Community Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs)

- Community feedback mechanisms are locally adapted systems that allow affected people to:
- Share concerns
- Report complaints
- Influence program decisions
- Examples include:
- Community elders acting as feedback focal points
- Suggestion boxes adapted to literacy levels
- Feedback collected through women's or youth groups
- When locally led, CFMs:
- Increase trust
- Reduce conflict and rumors
- Improve program relevance



Understanding Local Innovation in Practice

3 Local Water Management Innovations

- In drought-affected areas, communities have developed innovative water management practices to cope with scarcity.
- Examples include:
 - Community-managed water kiosks
 - Rotational water access schedules
 - Local water committees regulating use and fees
- These practices often:
 - Reduce conflict over water
 - Improve maintenance of infrastructure
 - Ensure continued access after project exit

4 Informal Protection and Support Networks

- In the absence of strong formal protection systems, Somali communities rely on:
 - Clan-based safety nets
 - Women-led mutual support groups
 - Youth solidarity networks
- These networks provide:
 - Emergency assistance
 - Psychosocial support
 - Protection referrals and mediation
- Such systems are flexible, rapid, and trusted, though often invisible to formal humanitarian actors.



5. Case Studies from Somalia

1 Community-Managed Water Kiosks in Drought-Affected Areas

- In several drought-prone regions, communities have established water kiosks managed by local committees. These committees:
- Set affordable prices
- Manage maintenance funds
- Prioritize vulnerable households during shortages

Why this is innovative:

- Shifts ownership from NGOs to communities
- Encourages accountability and sustainability
- Reduces dependency on emergency water trucking

2 Grassroots Women-Led Savings Groups Supporting Displaced Families

- Women-led savings groups have played a critical role in supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs) by:
- Providing small loans
- Covering emergency needs
- Supporting livelihood recovery

Why this matters:

- Builds financial resilience
- Strengthens women's leadership
- Reaches households often missed by formal aid

6. Participatory Exercise: Mapping Local Innovations

Exercise Objective

- To analyze local innovations through a power and inclusion lens.

Instructions

- Divide participants into small groups
- Each group selects one local innovation
- Map the following:
 - Who leads the innovation?
 - Who benefits most?
 - Who may be excluded or marginalized?
- Groups present findings in plenary

7. Desk Review Findings: Gaps in LHP Innovation Practice

Despite strong local innovation, desk reviews of Somali LHPs highlight common gaps.

1 Innovation Seen as External or Donor-Driven

- Many LHPs perceive innovation as:
- A donor requirement
- Linked to technology or pilots
- Led by international actors
- This perception limits confidence in recognizing local practices as innovation

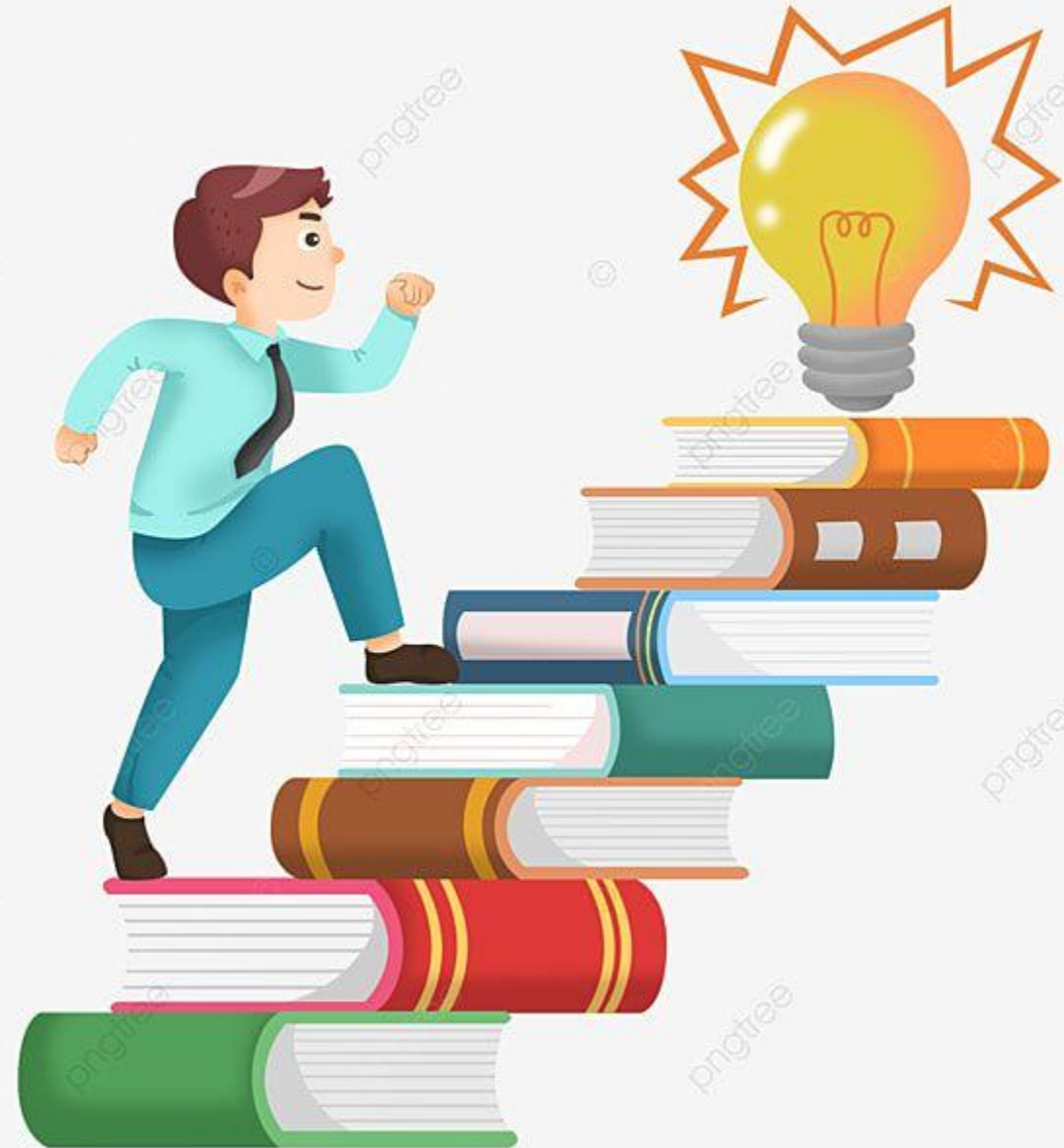
2 Limited Documentation of Local Innovations

- Common challenges include:
- Innovations not written down
- Knowledge remaining with individuals
- Lack of simple documentation tools
- As a result, valuable learning is often lost.

7. Desk Review Findings: Gaps in LHP Innovation Practice

3 Weak Learning and Scaling Mechanisms

- LHPs often lack:
- Platforms to share lessons
- Resources to test and adapt innovations
- Support to scale successful practices



8. Strengthening Local Innovation in LHPs

- To address these gaps, Somali local NGOs can:
- Recognize everyday practices as innovative
- Create simple tools to document what works
- Facilitate peer learning across organizations
- Advocate for donor flexibility and learning budgets

Key Message: Scaling innovation does not always mean expansion, it can also mean replication, adaptation, or policy influence.



Unit summary

Key Takeaways

- Somali communities and LHPs are rich sources of innovation
- Local solutions are often more sustainable and trusted
- Power and inclusion analysis is critical
- Documentation and learning are essential for scaling
- Donors and partners must shift from extraction to support

Reflection Question

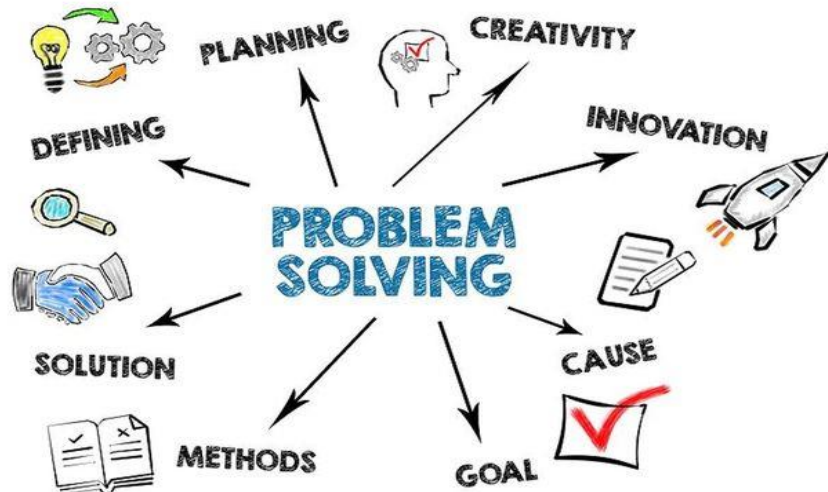
- Which local innovation in your organization or community deserves more recognition and what is one step you can take to strengthen it?

Unit 3: Problem-Solving Innovation in Resource-Constrained Environments



Introduction

This unit focuses on problem-solving innovation, the ability to clearly define problems, understand their root causes, and design frugal solutions that work within existing constraints. The unit equips participants with simple, structured tools that can be applied immediately in humanitarian and community development programming.



Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Apply structured problem-solving methods in humanitarian contexts
- Clearly define problems before proposing solutions
- Conduct root cause analysis for community challenges
- Design low-cost, practical, and testable solutions
- Apply *Do No Harm* principles, considering conflict, power, and clan dynamics

Key Concepts and Definitions

Problem Definition

- A problem is the difference between the current situation and the desired situation.
- In humanitarian work, problems are often:
 - Complex and interconnected
 - Influenced by governance, power, and access
 - Mistaken for symptoms
- Example:
 - Symptom: “There is no water today”
 - Problem: “The water system is poorly managed and unsustainable”

Note: Clear problem definition prevents wasted resources and ineffective interventions.

Root Cause Analysis

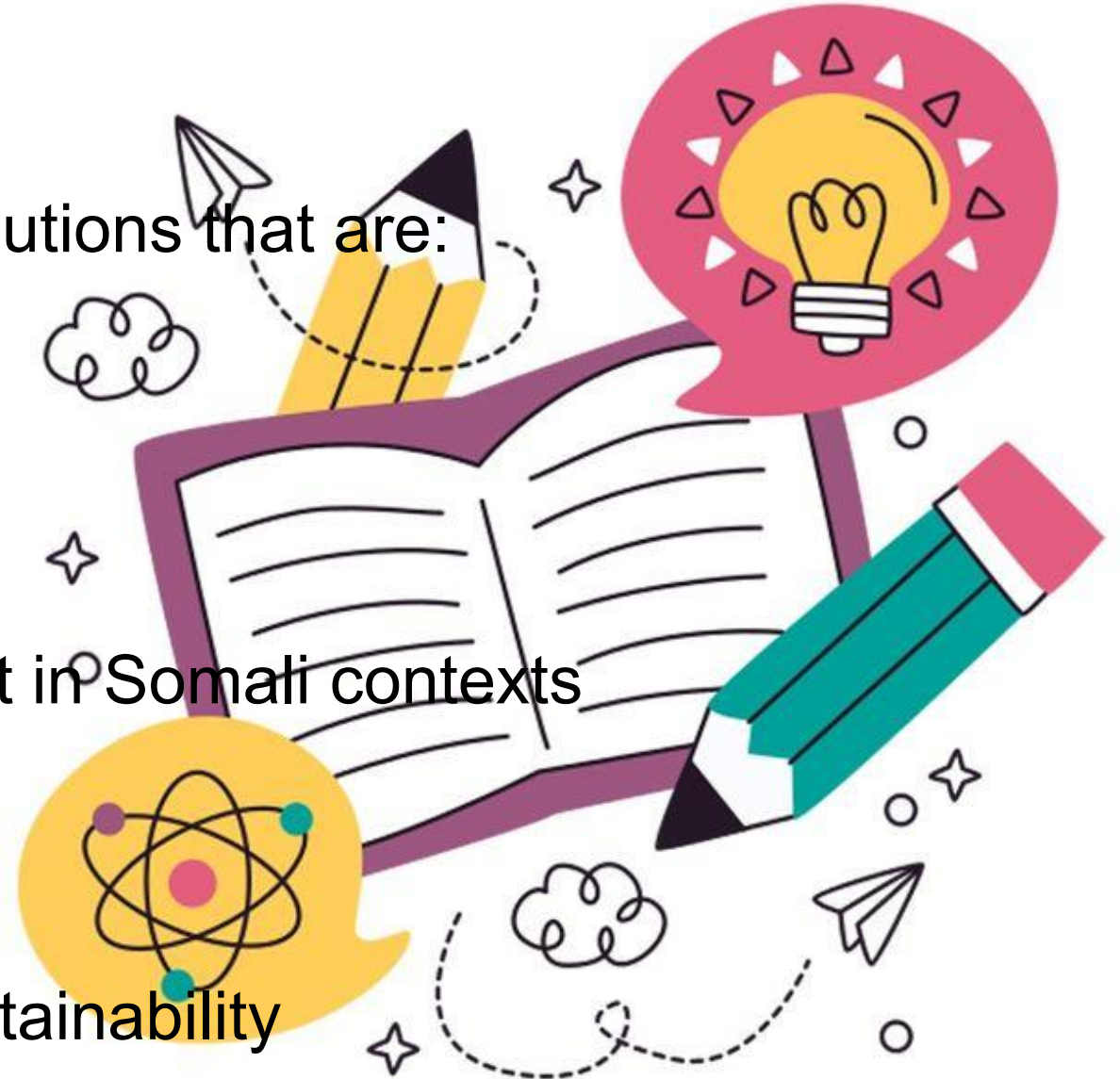
- Root cause analysis helps identify the deeper reasons a problem exists, rather than addressing surface-level symptoms.
- It asks:
 - Why does this problem keep happening?
 - What systems or behaviors sustain it?
 - Who controls decisions and resources?

Note: Understanding root causes is essential for sustainable and conflict-sensitive solutions.

Key Concepts and Definitions

Frugal Innovation

- Frugal innovation refers to creating solutions that are:
- Low-cost
- Simple and practical
- Locally manageable
- Resource-efficient
- Frugal innovation is especially relevant in Somali contexts where:
- Budgets are limited
- Access is constrained
- Community ownership determines sustainability

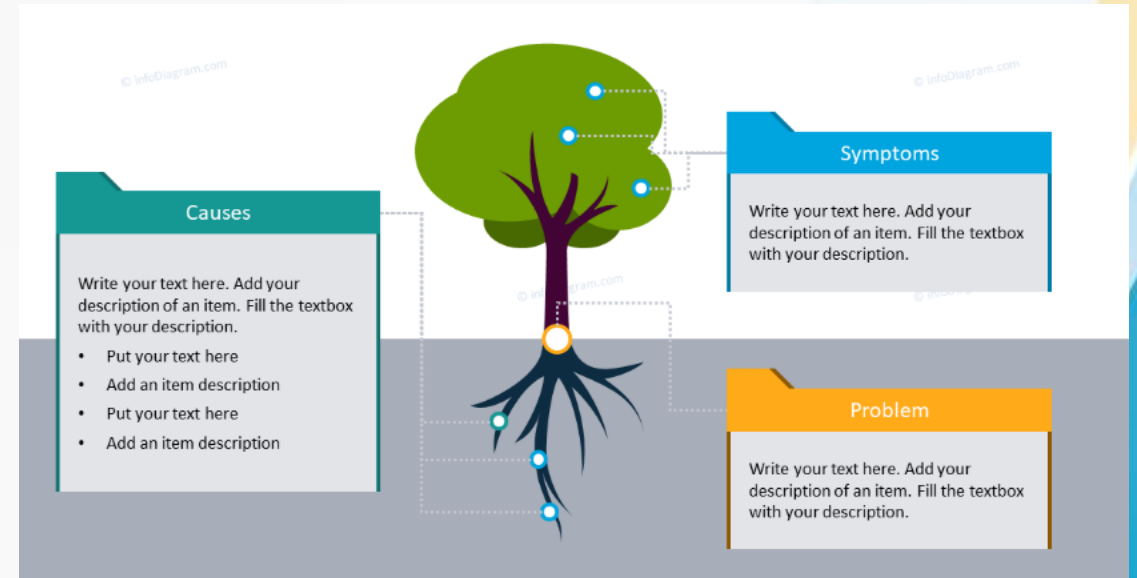


Structured Problem-Solving Tools

- **Problem Tree Analysis**
- The problem tree is a participatory visual tool used to analyze a problem by separating:
- Core problem
- Root causes
- Effects

Note: This tool encourages teams to think systemically and collaboratively.

Problem Tree Structure



Structured Problem-Solving Tools

5 Whys” Technique

- The 5 Whys technique explores root causes by repeatedly asking “Why?” until underlying issues are revealed.

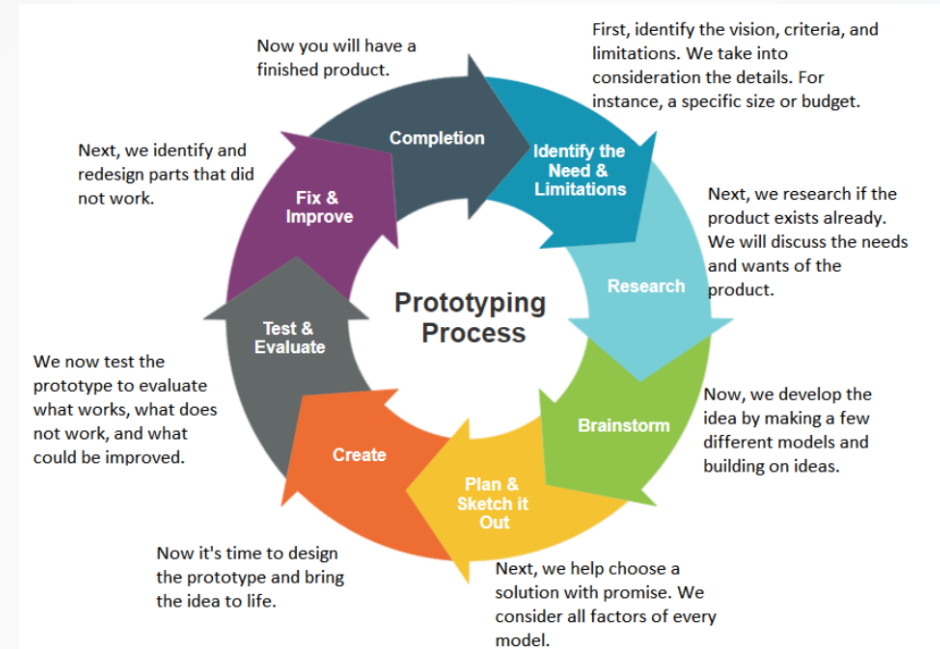
Example: Water Access in an IDP Camp

- Problem: Water shortages
- Why? → Water pump breaks frequently
- Why? → No regular maintenance
- Why? → No maintenance budget
- Why? → No agreed community contribution system
- Why? → Community not involved in decision-making
- **Note:** This method highlights governance and participation gaps rather than technical failures alone.

Rapid Prototyping

- Rapid prototyping involves testing a simple version of a solution on a small scale, learning from feedback, and improving it before wider rollout.
- In humanitarian settings, rapid prototyping:
 - Reduces risk
 - Saves resources
 - Allows adaptation to local realities

Rapid Prototyping Cycle



Participatory Exercise: Problem Tree Analysis

Exercise Objective

- To apply structured problem-solving tools to a real community challenge.

Suggested Case Study

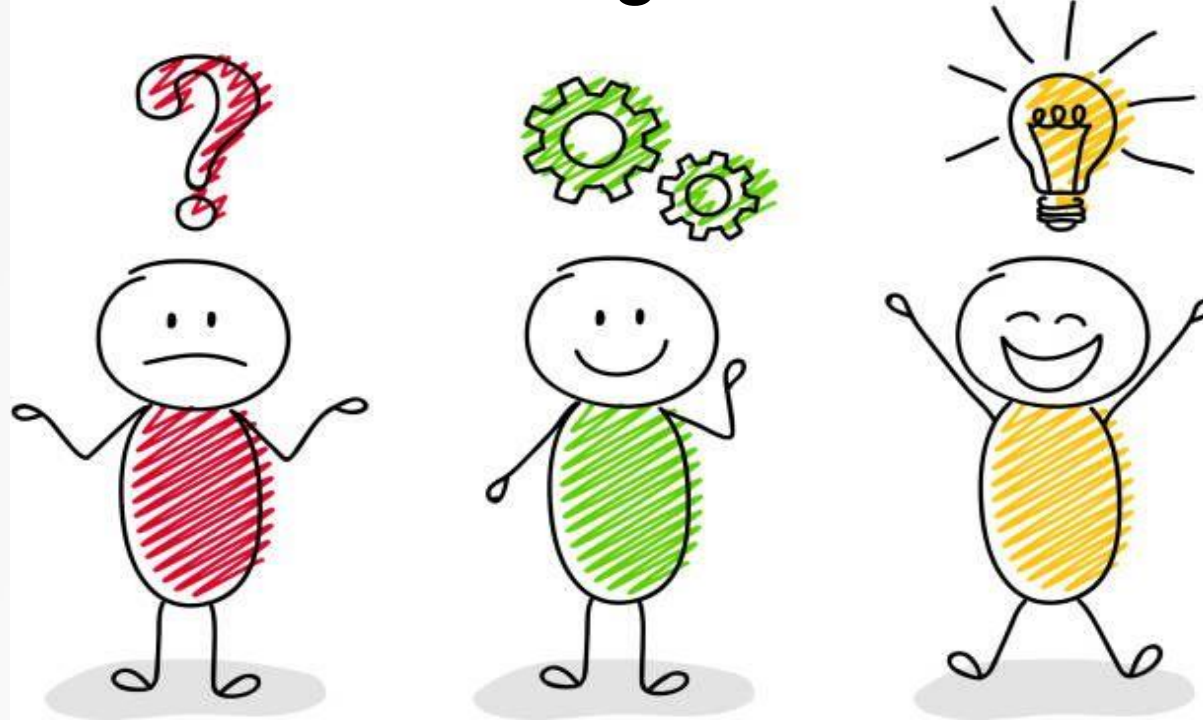
- **Water access in IDP camps**

• Exercise Steps

- Divide participants into groups of 4–6
- Agree on a clear core problem
- Identify root causes (technical, social, governance, power-related)
- Identify effects on health, protection, and conflict
- Draw the problem tree on flipchart paper
- Present findings in plenary

From Problem Analysis to Solution Design

- After identifying root causes, participants should:
- Select causes they can realistically influence
- Brainstorm frugal, low-cost solutions
- Prioritize solutions that strengthen community ownership



Do No Harm and Conflict Sensitivity

- Problem-solving innovation must be guided by Do No Harm principles.

Key Do No Harm Considerations

- Avoid solutions that increase dependency on aid
- Avoid reinforcing clan dominance or elite capture
- Ensure inclusive consultation (women, minorities, IDPs)
- Understand who controls resources and decision-making

Reflection Questions

- Who benefits most from this solution?
- Who may be excluded?
- Could this solution increase tension or conflict?

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Common Pitfalls in Resource-Constrained Innovation

- Jumping to solutions without analysis
- Importing complex or expensive models
- Ignoring social and clan dynamics
- Scaling solutions before testing

Note: Avoiding these pitfalls improves effectiveness and safety

Unit summary

Key Takeaways

- Clear problem definition is the foundation of good innovation
- Root cause analysis prevents repeated failure
- Frugal innovation fits Somali operational realities
- Testing small reduces risk and cost
- *Do No Harm* must guide all problem-solving efforts

Reflection Question

- What is one problem your organization faces where a clearer root cause analysis could lead to a simpler, safer solution?

Unit 4: Social Innovation, Gender, and Inclusion



Introduction

This unit focuses on social innovation: new or improved ways of addressing social challenges that create public good while transforming unequal relationships. It emphasizes gender-sensitive and inclusive innovation, ensuring that women, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities, and other marginalized groups are not only beneficiaries, but active designers and leaders of solutions.



Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Understand the concept of social innovation in humanitarian and development contexts
- Apply gender-sensitive and inclusive approaches to innovation
- Analyze how power and gender roles influence innovation processes
- Design innovation processes that safely include marginalized groups
- Integrate safeguarding and PSEA considerations into innovative programming

Key Concepts and Definitions

Social Innovation for the Public Good

- **Social innovation** refers to new or improved ideas, practices, or models that:
 - Address social needs more effectively
 - Create collective or public benefit
 - Transform social relationships and power dynamics
- In Somali contexts, social innovation often involves:
 - Community-led governance mechanisms
 - Women's collective action
 - Youth-driven solutions to unemployment and climate stress

- **Diagram 1: Social Innovation Pathway**



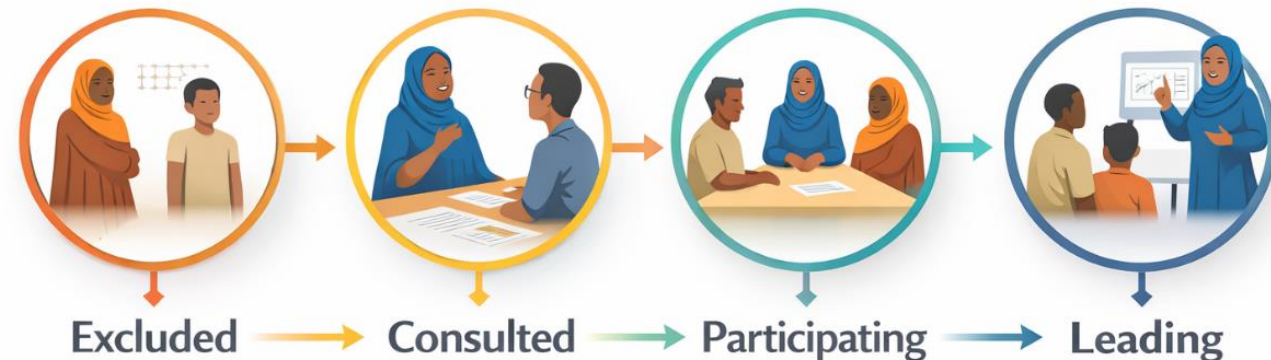
Key Concepts and Definitions

Gender Roles in Innovation

- Gender roles strongly influence:
 - Who has time, mobility, and voice
 - Who controls resources
 - Who is seen as a “leader” or “innovator”
- In many Somali communities:
 - Women innovate out of necessity at household and community level
 - Men often dominate formal decision-making spaces
- Recognizing women’s informal innovation is essential for sustainable impact.

- **Inclusion of Marginalized Groups**
- Inclusive innovation ensures participation of:
 - Women and girls
 - Youth
 - Persons with disabilities (PWDs)
 - Minority and marginalized clans
 - Internally displaced persons (IDPs)
- Inclusion is not automatic; it requires intentional design

Inclusion Spectrum



Social Innovation in Practice: Somali Examples

Grassroots Women Leading Livelihood Diversification

- Across Somalia, women's groups have led livelihood diversification initiatives such as:
- Small-scale trading
- Value addition to agricultural products
- Collective savings and investment schemes
- Digital early warning dashboards
- Anticipatory livelihood support models triggered by climate risk thresholds

These initiatives:

- Reduce household vulnerability
- Increase women's decision-making power
- Strengthen social cohesion

Why this is social innovation:

- It changes economic roles
- It strengthens collective action
- It benefits the wider community

Social Innovation in Practice: Somali Examples

Women-Led Climate Adaptation Activities

- Women are increasingly leading climate adaptation efforts, including:
- Drought-resilient livelihoods
- Water conservation practices
- Natural resource management initiatives
- These efforts are innovative because they:
- Combine indigenous knowledge with new practices
- Address climate risk and gender inequality simultaneously

Diagram 4: Women-Led Climate Adaptation Cycle



Participatory Exercise: Gender Analysis for Innovation

Exercise Objective

- To analyze who participates in innovation processes and who benefits.

Exercise Tool: Gender Analysis Questions

- Participants analyze a real or proposed innovation by asking:
- Who identifies the problem?
- Who designs the solution?
- Who makes decisions?
- Who benefits most?
- Who carries the risks?



Gender Analysis Framework

Gender Analysis Framework

- Design → Decision-Making → Benefits → Risks

Instructions

- Divide participants into small groups
- Select one innovation or project idea
- Apply the gender analysis questions
- Identify gaps and propose adjustments
- Share findings in plenary

Designing Gender-Sensitive and Inclusive Innovation

- To ensure inclusion, Somali local NGOs should:
- Engage women, youth, and marginalized groups early
- Use safe and culturally appropriate participation methods
- Recognize informal leadership and innovation
- Adapt meeting times, locations, and communication methods

Safeguarding and PSEA Integration

Innovation must never compromise safety or dignity.

Key Safeguarding Considerations

- Power imbalances may increase exploitation risks
- New approaches can unintentionally expose participants
- Women and youth may face backlash for participation

PSEA in Innovative Programming

- Ensure clear reporting and referral mechanisms
- Train staff and community focal points
- Communicate zero tolerance clearly
- Protect confidentiality

Safe Participation of Women and Youth

- To enable safe participation:
- Create women- and youth-only spaces where appropriate
- Work with trusted community structures
- Monitor risks continuously
- Respond quickly to concerns

Safe participation is essential for ethical and effective innovation

Unit summary

Key Takeaways

- Social innovation addresses social problems and power relations
- Gender and inclusion are central, not optional
- Women are key innovators in Somali communities
- Inclusion requires intentional and safe design
- Safeguarding and PSEA must guide all innovation efforts

Reflection Question

- Think of one innovation your organization supports. Whose voices are missing—and how can you safely include them?



Unit 5: Youth-Led Innovation in Somalia

Introduction

This unit focuses on youth-led innovation—recognizing young people not only as beneficiaries, but as innovators and change agents. It guides Somali local NGOs on how to responsibly support youth-led initiatives while managing risks, power imbalances, and safeguarding concerns.

Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Recognize youth as innovators and agents of change in humanitarian and development contexts
- Understand youth innovation ecosystems in Somalia
- Identify opportunities in digital and climate-related innovation led by youth
- Analyze barriers faced by youth innovators
- Design responsible approaches to supporting youth-led initiatives

Understanding Youth-Led Innovation

Youth as Innovators and Change Agents

- Youth-led innovation refers to solutions that are:
 - Identified, designed, and implemented by young people
 - Rooted in lived experience of challenges such as unemployment, climate stress, and displacement
 - Often informal, experimental, and adaptive
- Youth bring unique strengths to innovation, including:
 - Energy and creativity
 - Willingness to experiment and take calculated risks
 - Strong peer networks
 - High adaptability to digital tools

Youth Innovation Ecosystems in Somalia

A **youth innovation ecosystem** includes the people, institutions, resources, and relationships that enable young people to innovate.

Key Actors in the Ecosystem

- Youth groups and associations
- Universities and training institutions
- Technology hubs and innovation spaces
- Civil society organizations and local NGOs
- Diaspora networks
- Local authorities and community leaders
- In Somalia, these ecosystems are often fragmented but growing.

Youth Innovation Ecosystem



Digital and Climate Innovation by Youth

Digital Innovation

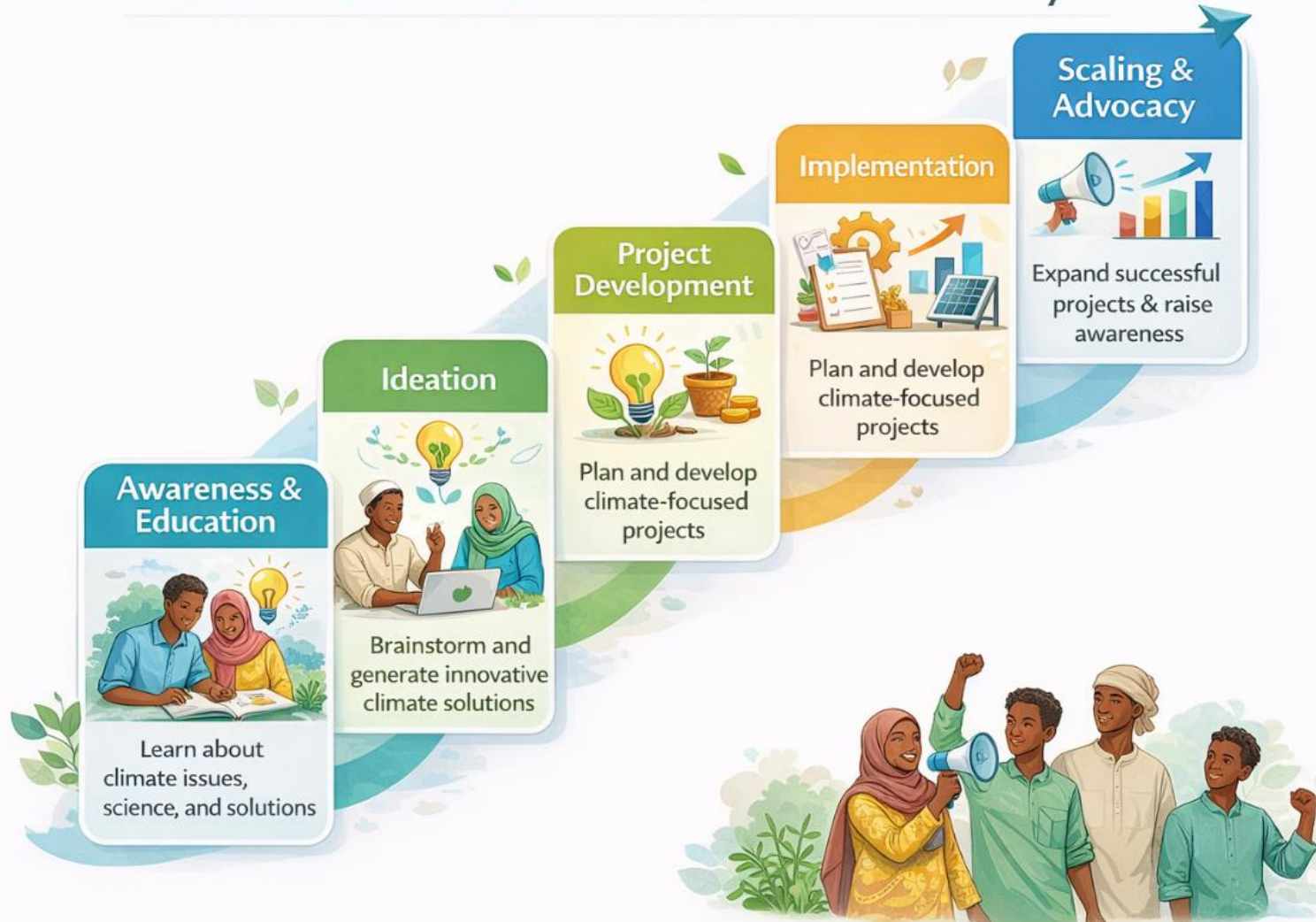
- Somali youth are at the forefront of digital innovation, particularly in:
- Social media advocacy
- Mobile-based information sharing
- Digital mapping and data collection
- Online learning and peer support
- Digital tools allow youth to:
- Overcome access and mobility barriers
- Reach wide audiences at low cost
- Engage in civic and humanitarian action

Youth-Led Climate Innovation

- Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges facing Somali youth. In response, young people are leading initiatives such as:
- Climate awareness campaigns
- Community clean-up and environmental protection
- Tree planting and land restoration
- Early warning information sharing
- These initiatives link environmental action with livelihoods, peace, and resilience.

Youth Climate Innovation Pathway

Youth Climate Innovation Pathway



Barriers Faced by Youth Innovators

- Despite their potential, Somali youth face multiple barriers to innovation.

Common Barriers

- Limited access to funding and seed capital
- Lack of mentorship and technical support
- Restricted decision-making power
- Social norms that limit youth voice
- Risks related to insecurity and political dynamics
- Understanding these barriers is essential for responsible support.

Case Study: Somalia Youth Climate Platform

- The Somalia Youth Climate Platform is a youth-led initiative that demonstrates the potential of organized, responsible youth innovation.
- **Key Activities**
- Climate awareness campaigns targeting communities and decision-makers
- Digital advocacy through social media and online platforms
- Community-based climate solutions, including environmental protection activities

Why This Is Innovative

- Youth-led and youth-governed
- Combines digital tools with community engagement
- Links local climate action to national and global advocacy



Supporting Youth-Led Innovation Responsibly

Somali local NGOs play a critical role in enabling youth innovation.

Responsible Support Approaches

- Provide mentorship rather than control
- Offer small, flexible funding
- Create safe spaces for experimentation
- Link youth to community leaders and institutions
- Manage risks through safeguarding and conflict sensitivity

Participatory Exercise: Youth Innovation Challenge

Exercise Objective

- To design a youth-led solution to a real local problem.

Instructions

- Divide participants into small groups
- Identify a local challenge affecting youth or the wider community
- Design a youth-led solution by answering:
 - What is the problem?
 - What is the youth-led idea?
 - Who will be involved?
 - What resources are needed?
 - What risks must be managed?
- Present solutions in plenary

Safeguarding and Do No Harm Considerations

Supporting youth innovation requires attention to safety and ethics.

Key Considerations

- Avoid exposing youth to political or security risks
- Ensure equal participation of young women and marginalized youth
- Prevent exploitation or unpaid labor
- Maintain clear safeguarding and reporting mechanisms

Unit summary

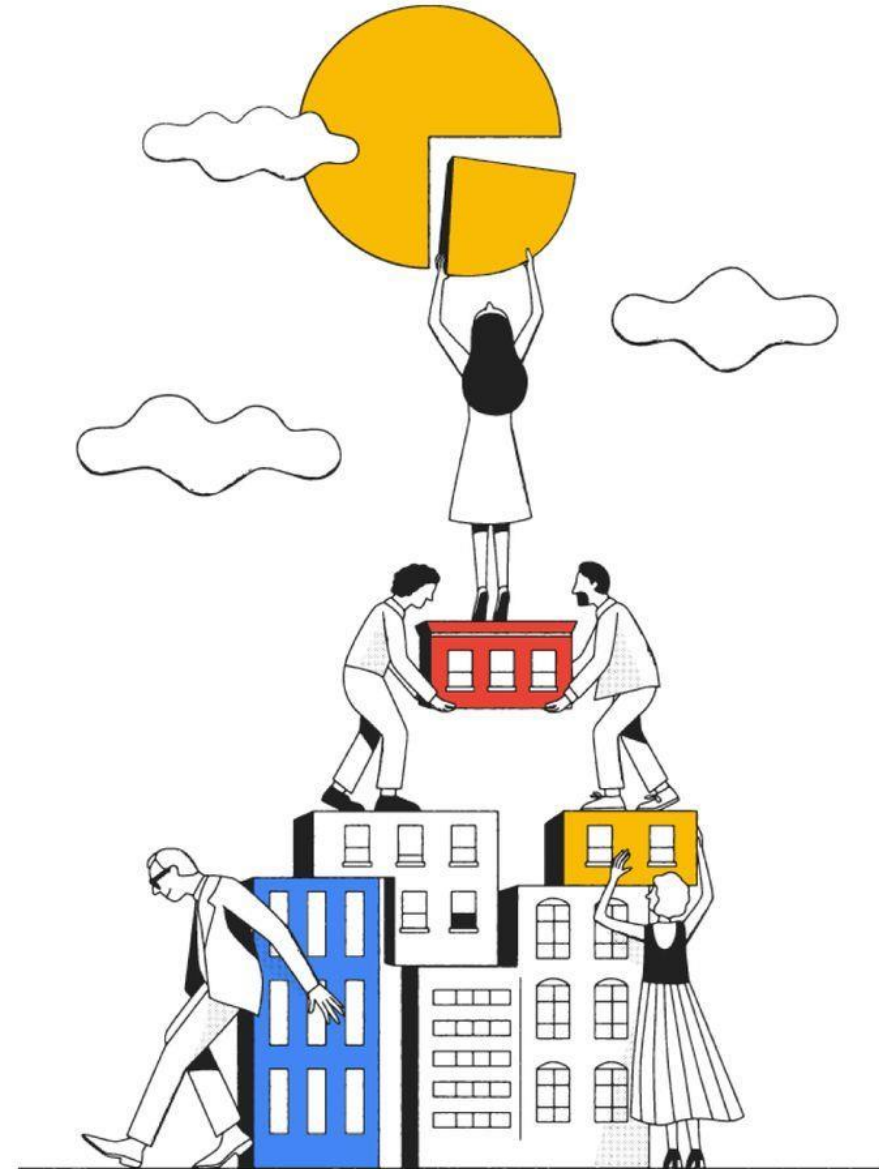
Key Takeaways

- Youth are central to innovation in Somalia
- Youth-led initiatives are often digital, climate-focused, and community-oriented
- Barriers limit youth potential but can be addressed
- NGOs should support youth with trust, mentorship, and safety
- Responsible support enables sustainable youth leadership

Reflection Question

- How can your organization shift from engaging youth as beneficiaries to supporting them as innovators and leaders?

Unit 6: Tools for Designing and Scaling Innovative Solutions



Introduction

- The unit introduces design thinking as a practical, human-centered approach to solution design, alongside scaling pathways suited to Somali operational realities. It emphasizes risk management, ethics, and safeguarding as essential considerations before scaling any innovation.

Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Apply design thinking tools to humanitarian and community challenges
- Design solutions based on community needs and feedback
- Understand different pathways for scaling innovations
- Decide when scaling is appropriate and when it is not
- Apply innovation risk assessment and safeguarding checks before scaling

Design Thinking: A Human-Centered Approach

What Is Design Thinking?

Design thinking is an approach to problem-solving that puts people at the center of solution design. It is especially useful in humanitarian contexts where:

- Needs are diverse and changing
- Solutions must be tested and adapted
- Community trust is essential
- Design thinking is iterative—it encourages learning by doing.

The Five Stages of Design Thinking: Design Thinking Process

This process is flexible—teams may move back and forth between stages.



Applying Design Thinking in Somali Contexts

Empathize and Define in Fragile Settings

- In Somali contexts, empathy requires:
- Listening to diverse voices (women, youth, minorities, IDPs)
- Understanding clan and power dynamics
- Considering security and access constraints
- Problem definition should reflect:
- Community priorities
- Root causes, not just symptoms
- Feasible scope for local NGOs

Ideation and Prototyping with Limited Resources

- Ideation should encourage:
- Low-cost, frugal ideas
- Use of local materials and skills
- Building on existing community practices
- Prototyping does not require expensive pilots. It can include:
- Small-scale trials
- Temporary arrangements
- Role-playing or mock-ups

Understanding Scaling Pathways

Scaling is not just expansion. It means increasing impact in a responsible way.

Common Scaling Pathways

- Not all innovations should be scaled. Some are best kept local.



Deciding When and How to Scale

- Before scaling, organizations should assess:
- Evidence of effectiveness
- Community ownership and acceptance
- Risks related to conflict, exclusion, or harm
- Organizational capacity

Table 4: Scale Readiness Checklist

Question	Yes / No
Has the solution been tested?	
Do communities support it?	
Are risks understood and managed?	
Is safeguarding integrated?	
Do we have capacity to scale?	

Risk Management in Innovation

Innovation always involves risk. Responsible organizations manage these risks proactively.

Innovation Risk Assessment

- Common risks include:
- Exacerbating conflict or clan tensions
- Excluding vulnerable groups
- Creating dependency
- Overstretching organizational capacity

Innovation Risk Assessment Matrix

Risk Type	Example	Mitigation Measure
Social	Elite capture	Inclusive governance
Protection	Increased exposure	Safeguarding measures
Operational	Lack of skills	Training and mentorship
Financial	Unsustainable costs	Frugal design

Ethical and Safeguarding Checks Before Scaling

Scaling innovation increases exposure and responsibility.

- **Key Ethical Questions**
- Does this innovation protect dignity and rights?
- Are women, youth, and minorities safe to participate?
- Are feedback and complaint mechanisms in place?

Ethical Decision Pathway: If risks outweigh benefits, scaling should be delayed or stopped.

Stage	Decision
Innovation Design	Ethical by design?
Pilot Phase	Any harm observed?
Pre-Scaling	Safeguarding approved?
Scaling	Continuous monitoring

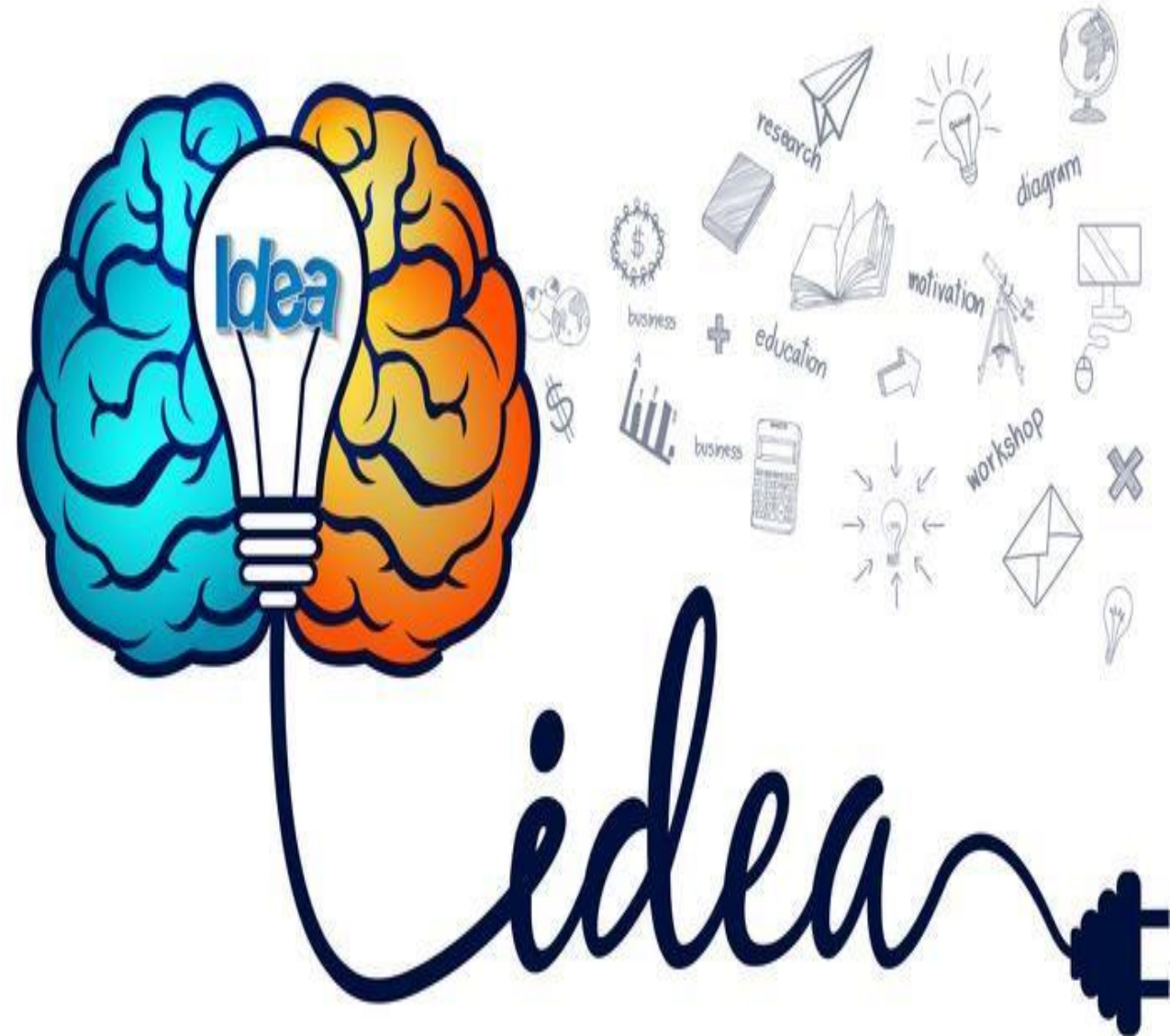
Simulation Exercise: Design Thinking Lab

Exercise Objective

- To practice designing and refining an innovation for a real Somali context challenge.

Instructions

- Divide participants into teams
- Assign each team a real challenge (e.g., water access, youth unemployment, climate adaptation)
- Teams apply the five design thinking stages
- Develop a simple prototype and scaling idea
- Present solutions and receive peer feedback



Unit summary

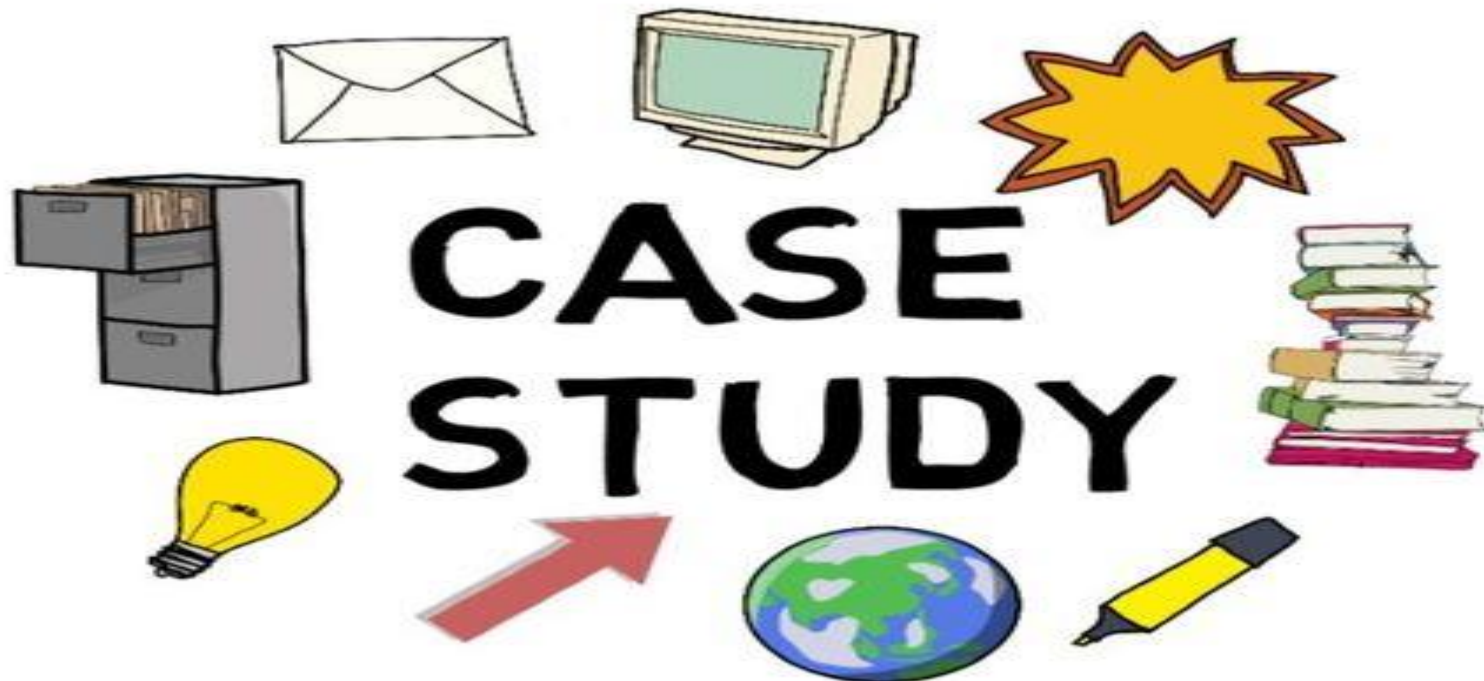
Key Takeaways

- Design thinking helps create people-centered solutions
- Prototyping and testing reduce failure
- Scaling requires strategy, evidence, and ethics
- Not all innovations should be scaled
- Risk management and safeguarding are essential for responsible growth

Reflection Question

- What innovation in your organization is ready to be redesigned, tested, or scaled more responsibly?

Unit 7: Case Studies from Somalia and East Africa



Introduction


- This unit uses practical humanitarian and community development examples to strengthen participants' ability to analyze innovation, identify success factors, and draw transferable lessons without copying models blindly.

Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Learn from innovation experiences in Somalia and East Africa
- Analyze why specific innovations succeeded or struggled
- Identify enabling and limiting factors in different contexts
- Assess whether and how innovations can be adapted locally
- Apply lessons to their own programming responsibly

Why Case Studies Matter in Humanitarian Innovation

Case studies:

- Show how innovation works in reality, not theory
 - Highlight contextual factors such as culture, power, and resources
 - Reveal risks, trade-offs, and unintended consequences
 - Encourage reflection rather than replication
- 
- For Somali NGOs, regional learning is especially valuable because:
 - Contexts are often similar (climate, livelihoods, governance)
 - Local solutions already exist
 - South-South learning builds confidence and ownership

Case Study 1: Somalia – Mobile Cash Delivery Systems

Somalia has one of the world's most advanced mobile money ecosystems. Humanitarian actors adopted mobile cash transfers to deliver assistance efficiently during droughts, displacement, and emergencies

- **The Innovation**
- Use of mobile money platforms to deliver cash assistance
- Integration with local vendors and markets
- Reduced need for physical cash handling

Somalia – Mobile Cash Delivery Systems

What Made It Successful?

- Strong local telecom infrastructure
- Community familiarity with mobile money
- Increased dignity and choice for recipients
- Faster and safer delivery

Challenges Faced

- Exclusion of people without phones or literacy
- Risk of elite capture or fraud
- Dependence on private providers

Case Study 2: Somalia – Youth Digital Awareness Campaigns

Somali youth increasingly use digital platforms to address social, environmental, and humanitarian issues, including climate change, peacebuilding, and health awareness.

The Innovation

- Youth-led social media campaigns
- Use of local languages and storytelling
- Linking online awareness to offline community action

Stage	Description
Issue Identification	Youth identify community concern
Digital Awareness	Online messaging and advocacy
Community Engagement	Dialogues and mobilization
Local Action	Practical solutions
Learning	Reflection and adaptation

Case Study 2: Somalia – Youth Digital Awareness Campaigns

Success Factors

- Youth credibility and peer influence
- Low cost and wide reach
- Flexibility and creativity

Challenges

- Digital exclusion of rural populations
- Online security and misinformation risks
- Limited funding for scaling

Case Study 3: East Africa – Community Drought Resilience Initiatives

- Across East Africa, communities face recurrent drought. Local organizations have supported community-led resilience initiatives combining indigenous knowledge and practical adaptation measures.

The Innovation

- Community water management committees
- Rangeland rehabilitation and water harvesting
- Early warning and preparedness systems

Cross-Case Analysis: What Do These Innovations Have in Common?

Cross-Case Comparison

Factor	Mobile Cash	Youth Digital	Drought Resilience
Local Leadership	Medium	High	High
Cost-Effectiveness	High	High	Medium
Inclusion Risks	Medium	Medium	High
Scalability	High	Medium	Medium
Sustainability	Medium	Medium	High

Transferable Lessons for Somali Local NGOs

Key lessons include:

- Innovation builds on **existing systems**, not imported models
- Community trust and ownership are critical
- Digital tools are powerful but not neutral
- Inclusion and safeguarding must be intentional
- Scaling requires evidence and capacity
- **Note:** Not every innovation should be copied; adaptation is essential

Reflection and Group Discussion

Reflection Questions

- Participants discuss in small groups:
- What made this innovation successful in its context?
- What challenges or risks were encountered?
- Who benefited most, and who may have been excluded?
- Can this innovation be adapted locally? How?
- What changes would be needed to fit your community?



Practical Exercise: Local Adaptation Planning

Instructions

- Select one case study
- Identify one lesson relevant to your organization
- Map how it could be adapted locally
- Identify risks and mitigation measures
- Share findings with the group

Unit summary

Key Takeaways

- Regional case studies offer powerful learning opportunities
- Success depends on context, people, and systems
- Adaptation is more important than replication
- Ethical, inclusive, and safe innovation leads to sustainable impact

Closing Reflection

- What lesson from these case studies will you take back to improve your own programming?



Unit 8: Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) for Innovation

Introduction

This unit introduces learning-oriented MEL for innovation, emphasizing simplicity, participation, and practical use in humanitarian and community development programming.

Learning Outcomes

- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Track innovation processes and results systematically
- Distinguish between outputs and outcomes
- Apply learning-oriented MEL approaches
- Use evidence to adapt and improve innovations
- Develop a simple innovation MEL framework suitable for local NGOs

Why MEL Is Critical for Innovation

Innovation involves uncertainty. MEL helps organizations:

- Learn quickly from testing and failure
- Reduce risks before scaling
- Strengthen accountability to communities
- Demonstrate results to partners and donors
- In Somali contexts, MEL must be:
 - Low-cost and practical
 - Sensitive to security and access constraints
 - Inclusive of community voices

Learning-Oriented MEL

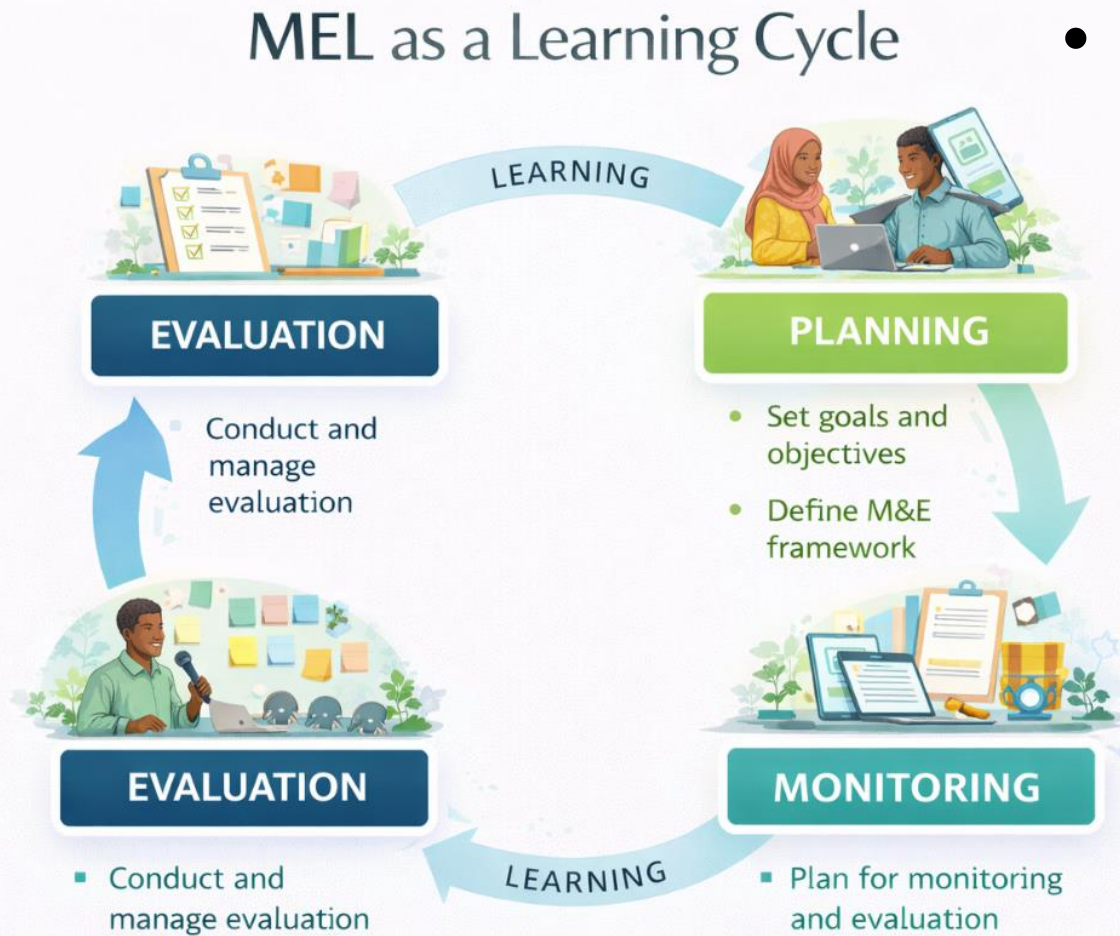
What Is Learning-Oriented MEL?

Learning-oriented MEL focuses on continuous learning and improvement, not just measuring success or failure.

Traditional vs Learning-Oriented MEL

Traditional M&E	Learning-Oriented MEL
Focus on reporting	Focus on learning
Fixed indicators	Flexible indicators
End-of-project reviews	Continuous reflection
Donor accountability	Community & organizational learning

MEL as a Learning Cycle



- This cycle aligns well with adaptive management in fragile contexts.

Understanding Outputs and Outcomes

- **Outputs** measure what activities produce
- **Outcomes** measure changes resulting from those outputs

- **Chart 2: Output vs Outcome Examples**

Area	Output Indicator	Outcome Indicator
Innovation	Number of ideas tested	Improved solution quality
Participation	Number of meetings held	Increased community trust
Inclusion	% women/youth involved	Improved decision-making equity
Service	Tools distributed	Improved access or usage

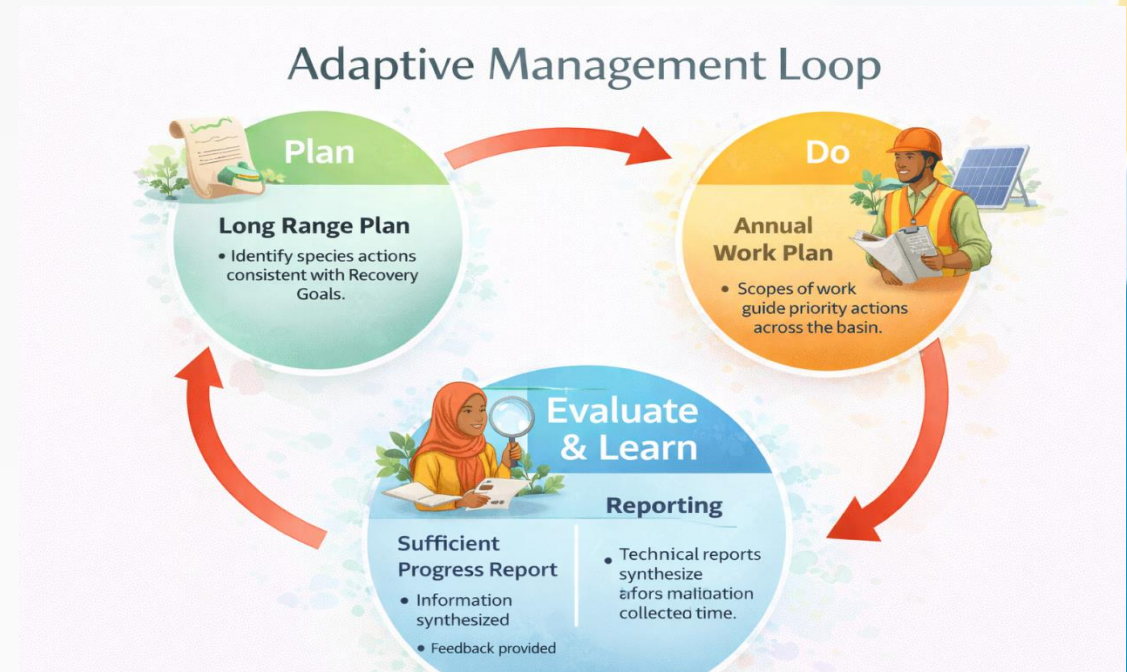
Adaptive Management in Innovation

Adaptive management means **using data and learning to change course** when needed.

- **Key Features**
- Regular reflection meetings
- Flexible activity plans
- Rapid feedback loops

Adaptive Management Loop

- Adaptive management is especially important where:
- Contexts change rapidly
- Innovations are being tested



Sample Innovation Indicators

Innovation indicators should be **simple, relevant, and actionable.**

Process Indicators

- Number of innovation ideas generated
- Number of ideas tested or piloted
- Frequency of learning meetings

Outcome Indicators

- Community satisfaction with the innovation
- Inclusion of women and youth in design and decision-making
- Evidence of improved access, quality, or resilience

Sample Innovation Indicator Framework

Dimension	Example Indicator	Data Source
Process	# ideas tested	Project records
Participation	% women/youth engaged	Attendance lists
Quality	User satisfaction score	Community feedback
Impact	Improved outcomes observed	Surveys / observation

Participatory MEL and Community Feedback

Participatory MEL ensures that communities are:

- Sources of data
- Analysts of findings
- Decision-makers for adaptation

Common tools include:

- Community scorecards
- Focus group discussions
- Feedback and complaints mechanisms
- This strengthens accountability and trust.

Exercise: Developing a Simple Innovation MEL Framework


Exercise Objective

- To practice designing a practical MEL framework for innovation projects.

Instructions

- Identify one innovation from your organization
- Define 2–3 output indicators
- Define 2–3 outcome indicators
- Identify simple data collection methods
- Decide how learning will be reviewed and used

Using MEL Findings for Improvement

- Learning should lead to action, such as:
 - Refining the innovation
 - Adjusting implementation approaches
 - Deciding whether to scale or stop
 - MEL findings should be shared with:
 - Communities
 - Staff and partners
 - Donors (in appropriate formats)
- 

Unit summary

Key Takeaways

- MEL is essential for responsible innovation
- Learning-oriented MEL supports adaptation
- Simple indicators are often more useful than complex ones
- Participation strengthens learning and accountability
- Evidence guides scaling decisions

Closing Reflection

- How can MEL in your organization move from reporting to learning?
-



Unit 9: Innovation Action Planning

Introduction

- For Somali local NGOs, innovation planning must be context-aware, low-cost, ethical, and locally owned. This unit emphasizes feasibility over ambition, and learning over perfection.
- **Learning Outcomes**
- By the end of this unit, participants will be able to:
- Apply innovation concepts and tools to their own organizational context
- Develop a realistic innovation idea to pilot
- Identify key stakeholders and roles
- Assess risks and mitigation measures
- Define simple MEL indicators for learning and improvement

From Ideas to Action: Why Innovation Planning Matters

Many innovation efforts fail because they:

- Are too ambitious
- Ignore risks and power dynamics
- Lack clear ownership
- Do not include learning mechanisms

Innovation action planning helps organizations:

- Focus on what is **possible now**
- Align innovation with humanitarian principles
- Strengthen accountability and sustainability

Step-by-Step Innovation Action Planning Process

Innovation Action Planning Cycle



- This cycle reinforces learning and responsible decision-making.

Defining a Pilot Innovation Idea

Participants should identify **one small, testable innovation**, such as:

- A new community engagement approach
- A low-cost service delivery improvement
- A youth- or women-led solution

Stakeholder Mapping and Localization

Innovation is rarely implemented alone. Identifying stakeholders ensures ownership and support.

- **Key Stakeholder Categories**
- Community members and leaders
- Women, youth, and marginalized groups
- Local authorities
- Partner NGOs or networks

Stakeholder Mapping Table

Localization means placing local actors at the center of innovation decisions.

Stakeholder	Role	Influence	Engagement Strategy

Risk Analysis, Do No Harm, and Safeguarding

Every innovation introduces risk. Responsible planning requires early identification and mitigation.

Key Risk Areas

- Conflict and clan dynamics
- Gender exclusion or backlash
- Safeguarding and PSEA risks
- Dependency or elite capture

Risk and Mitigation Matrix

If risks cannot be mitigated, the innovation should be redesigned or postponed.

Risk	Who is affected	Likelihood	Mitigation measure

Defining MEL Indicators for the Pilot

Innovation MEL focuses on **learning**, not just success.

- **Suggested Indicator Types**
- Process indicators (what is tested)
- Inclusion indicators (who participates)
- Outcome indicators (what changes)

- **Innovation MEL Planning Table**

Indicators should be simple and feasible.

Indicator	Type	Data source	Learning use

Cross-Cutting Themes in Innovation Action Plans

All innovation plans must embed:

- **Humanitarian principles**
(humanity, neutrality, impartiality, independence)
- **Gender equality and inclusion**
- **Safeguarding and PSEA**
- **Conflict sensitivity and Do No Harm**
- **Localization and sustainability**

• Cross-Cutting Integration Checklist

Theme	Key Question	Addressed?
Humanitarian principles	Does it respect dignity and neutrality?	
Gender & inclusion	Are women and youth meaningfully involved?	
Safeguarding	Are risks identified and mitigated?	
Conflict sensitivity	Does it avoid increasing tensions?	
Sustainability	Can it continue locally?	

Final Exercise: Innovation Action Plan Development

- **Exercise Objective**

- To develop a complete, realistic innovation action plan.

- **Instructions**

- Each participant develops:
- One innovation idea to pilot
- Key stakeholders and roles
- Key risks and mitigation measures
- Simple MEL indicators
- Participants present their plans and receive peer feedback.



Unit Summary

Key Takeaways

- Innovation requires intentional planning
- Small pilots reduce risk and increase learning
- Cross-cutting themes must be integrated from the start
- MEL supports decision-making, not just reporting
- Responsible innovation strengthens local ownership and sustainability

Closing Reflection

- What is one innovation you will take forward differently after this training?

